

EXT - WALL OF DOCTOR OFFICE - DAY

Revised May, 09

MUSIC---Glee Club graduation music, sung by Ivy League choir. Photos show the stages of graduation of a young doc, JOHN BALDINO from young adult med student all the way to getting prestigious awards. With him in photos are people from his early past, his mother, father and wise-cracking brother. John looks very studious in some shots, whimsical in others, as he goes from resident to White House Distinguishing Award (US President giving him award) to Academy of Science Award winner. Each award given has a more distinguished presenter, the last one, a pie, given in the face by brother Vincent, said brother wearing Army uniform.

INT - BANQUET HALL - DAY

PAN of banner reading "Doctor John Baldino---Doctor of the Year, 1995", fading to "1996", then "1997" then "1998". MUSIC continues. APPLAUSE.

CLOSE on hand of waiter pouring wine into a glass. Picking up the glass, nervous, JOHN BALDINO, M.D., Ph.D., middle-aged man, bearded, reflective. He's not feeling or doing so good, hiding it from the crowd. Something in the wine doesn't agree with him.

WAITER

Something wrong with the wine, Doctor Baldino?

BALDINO

Three parts red, two parts white, one part...
Lysol?

WAITER

It's a rare vintage, Sir.

A drunken colleague, Dr. BILL JONES, next to Baldino, one of the good ole-boy docs, pats him on the back.

JONES

And an expensive one! We'll get you drunk
in style!!! Speech!!!!

The table yells. "Speech!" Everyone joins in. Baldino feels woozy. From his POV, everyone in the room looks blurry. Still he gets up to talk. PAN the room, everyone cheering Baldino on. But one member of the dinner-crowd audience, BLANCHE BLACK, 35-something nurse, sees something in John she is worried about.

BALDINO

I ehh....

Baldino looks out into the audience, hallucinating. The heads of the people look more blurry. Still he pressed on.

BALDINO

This award belongs to everyone. My fellow doctors,
the nurses, the techs, the patients who made the healing
possible...and to...my family...

One of the faces is that of his mother and father, abberations, father MIKE in WWII uniform, mother HELENA as a UN missionary. Then, his brother, VINCENT, in fatigues, an apparition, blood progressively on his clothes, then a stigmata on his hand and barefeet, then fading away...

BALDINO

...who sacrificed their lives overseas, in so many
places of change and hardship so I could
heal people here in places of...of...of...

Baldino faints. Guilt, horror, as the ghost of his parents, then Vincent, disappear. CLOSE on his eyes. We hear, from offscreen, a cold-hearted DOCTOR, with a heavy Long Island accent.

DOCTOR(o/s)

Mister Belucha...Mister Belucha...

INT - X-RAY ROOM - DAY

Baldino is seated, dressed as a "commoner". He gazes at the CAT scans in front of him, shocked. It is a low-end, grungy, free-clinic.

DOCTOR

Mister Belucha....

BALDINO

Huh?

The doc speaks to Baldino slowly, as he would to an immigrant who understands no English. Baldino knows he's in serious medical shit.

DOCTOR

Did you get these headaches when you left
Kosovo?

BALDINO

Huh?

DOCTOR
(with sign language)
Kosovo. Headaches in head. How long have you
had these headaches? How long?

Baldino puts up two fingers.

DOCTOR
(using calender as aid)
Two months?

Baldino shakes his head, 'no'--in horror.

DOCTOR
Weeks?

DOCTOR
Days?

Baldino goes berserk, shakes head 'no', screaming.

BALDINO
No!!!!

INT - BALDINO OFFICE - DAY

Blanche picks up memos from Baldino's office desk, finding under it a sign, "Gone Fishing" with an envelope.

BLANCHE
No...Two weeks? The workahallic champion of
workahollics is taking a two week vacation for the
first time in twenty years...

Another NURSE comes by.

NURSE
Where's the Doctor?

BLANCHE
Healing himself...Somewhere...(reading note)...
East of Eden...

EXT - HIGHWAY -DAY

A car ZOOMS by a sign in coastal New England, reading Eden, Maine, population 125. The terrain beyond it is even more desolate.

BLANCHE (v/o)

"I have nine fish to catch..."

INT - CAR - DAY

Baldino, back to his senses, driving, taking meds to keep himself going.

BLANCHE (v/o)

"...after I catch my fourteen fish..."

Beside Baldino, an open set of memoirs, dated 1978. He opens it up, very dusty.. The table of contents has titles for fourteen poems. Title of the memoirs reads.

BLANCHE (v/o)

"...fish that shaped my life...
...fish that were each very...human."

Baldino shuts the cover of the book as the wind is about to open the first page---not time to read it yet. The cover of the volume reads (as Blanche repeats it):

BLANCHE

"The people who turned me into the healer
I am today."

Another burst of wind blows open another book on the seat, revealing snapshots and drawings of people from the photos in the PAN of his office wall. He VIOLENTLY shuts it--as it opens, throwing dust in his face, nearly causing him to go off the side of the road. CAR HONKS. He takes another med. All okay again. He looks at dose of pills. Enough to keep going. He looks at lab report.

BALDINO

It can't be right... It can't be...It's medically
impossible for me to be....

He looks at photos/sketches.

BALDINO

(to the people in sketches/photos)

I know, doctors make the worst patients.
But what we leave behind to the next
generation of healers...What we leave behind...

INT - BEACHHOUSE - DAY

Leading John into the a modest beachhouse, on an isolated part of the coast, a jetty with rocks below jutting out into the surf, CATHY O'BRIAN, thirty-something local, crusty but civil, Irish accent.

CATHY (Irish accent)
So...Mister Baldino. You're a writer?

BALDINO
Or so I'll find out?

CATHY
Excuse me?

BALDINO
I brought lots of paper, pens and angst.
A shame to not put them to use.

Baldino opens up his gear, taking out things that become progressively medical, or, to Cathy, maybe druggy.

CATHY
(progressively more suspicious)
Lots of artists come to Cove Point in the off season.
They like the solitude, and the freedom. But even
in the off season, we have rules. No drunken brawls, Mr. Baldino.

BALDINO
No problem, Mrs. OBrien.

CATHY
No orgies, Mister Baldino.

BALDINO
No problem, Mrs. O'Brien.

CATHY
No drugs, Mister Baldino.

BALDINO
No problem. I'm on medication.

CATHY
And if you commit suicide like the last tenant,
clean up after yourself.

BALDINO

Mrs. O'Brien?

CATHY

Miss! Or Ms.

BALDINO

Sorry...

Cathy checks the electrical circuits, as if they are very important. She seems to take liking to John, but is suspicious as he unpacks. She eyes his memoirs.

CATHY

What is your first name, Mister Baldino?

BALDINO

Huh?

CATHY

Your travel agent booked you here under...
(looking at ledger)
...Jake, Jack...?

BALDINO

John.

CATHY

You have a Doctor's handwriting...

Baldino is shocked. How did she guess?

CATHY

The sqiggles...and the....(spots medical books)

BALDINO

I did some medical training...in RESEARCH...

Cathy gives an 'ahuh' to John.

CATHY

Have a good stay, 'Mister' Baldino.

BALDINO

Thanks, Miss O'Brien.

CATHY

Cathy...everyone on the Point calls me Cathy.
We got time fer everything here on the Point
except formalities, John.

BALDINO

Good rule, Cathy.

John unpacks his journal. Cathy tries to get a look at it.

CATHY

What kind of stuff do you write?

BALDINO

Private stuff...

CATHY

Sorry...

BALDINO

(ominous)

It will become public...soon enough.

CATHY

There's a set of emergency numbers by the
phone. Mine's above it....in case you need...

BALDINO

I'll be fine...Thanks....Cathy.

CATHY

Good writing, Mister Baldino.

BALDINO

Good night, Ms. O'Brien.

Cathy leaves. John looks around the beachhouse, has a bad stomach, hallucinates some more, opens the fridge, finds food in it. Helps himself to some milk, with his own medication. He sits down, opens the book to the first poem.

He looks around the room. He hears footsteps. He follows them, in mad search of the ghost.

BALDINO

Vincent. Mom. Pop. Who the hell. Where the hell
are you and what...?

Finally he traps the ghost---a cat, with a pen in its mouth. Relieve.

BALDINO

Red ink, hopefully not blood. We experience feelings. Future generations deserve clear and vital explanations...

Baldino sits down, writes out the first story. ZOOM IN on his eyes, horrified and looking very old, then DISSOLVE to---

INT - HOSPITAL: ROOM - DAY

CU of YOUNG BALDINO's eyes, as a non-caring, cocky, 19 year old orderly, cleaning bedpan for a comatose patient, JOHN SMITH. CLOSE on Smith's eyes. They are motionless, but he can feel and hear everything around him, including the rantings of DOCTOR WILD BILL BRADY, obnoxiously pompous physician, surrounded by interns. Brady lifts up the hands, and feet--they are cold and clammy.

BRADY

Patient name- John Smith. POSSIBLE diagnosis, Central Pontine Myelosis. According to one of the JUNIOR residents....

Young Baldino's eyes light up. He stops, looks at Smith.

BALDINO (v/o)

I read about this in Brain Research Reports... Degeneration of myelinated tracts in the brain stem, due to endogenous edema from blood vessels, so the authors claim...But I'm sure it's some kind of toxin..An acid... an aldehyde...maybe even a defective neurotransmitter leakage from...

BRADY

Voluntary tone in hands, absent...Feet, absent...

Brady flashes a light into the eye.

BRADY

Pupillary light reflex present, and consensual.

Baldino stops working, watches.

BALDINO (v/o)

Superior collicular and geniculate pathways intact...
Interesting.

An intern gives him the 'get on to work' with his hands. The young Baldino begrudgingly gets back to it.

Brady moves the head, then his finger in front of the eyes.

BRADY

Eye movements...absent.

BALDINO (v/o)

Nothing going inside that cranial vault above the thalamus...

BRADY

...Reflexes...

Brady pokes and prods with reflex hammers, hard. CLOSE on mallet as it hits the knee, eliciting a hard and loud JOLT and a scream of pain, from Smith's motionless eyes. The scream rouses up Baldino. He's the only one who hears it in his mind.

BALDINO

Huh!!!!

While the docs poke and prod, with medicaleze evolving into jibberish, Baldino looks into Smith's motionless eyes and is spoken to.

SMITH (v/o., Western accent)

Yeah, it DOES hurt. Can't you make these tin-horn eggheads see that?

BALDINO

Huh?

SMITH (v/o)

You got to have SOME brains inside that heart, and fire in that gut. Tell them I'm alive in here. Kickin like a bronc hold up in a trailer on a million-mile road trip with no dead end to it. Tell them these hammers are pounding my bones brittle. Tell them these needles hurt, even the ones that don't make me bleed. Tell them that I'm alive. Tell my family I'm still alive. Tell someone there's a real, live human bein locked inside this coffin...

BALDINO

Buuuu buuuu...

One of the residents tells Baldino to 'shhh' as he listens to the chest.

SMITH (o/s)

And that hearing aid they got on my chest
is cold...I can feel that...I can feel his cold,
clammy fingers, I can feel his cold heart...and
oh God, not again!!!

BALDINO

Haaaa!!!!

SMITH

The itch. It's back, like a rattler
under my skin that won't let go
...And it never goes away...
It's on my back....then my arms...then my nose
then...the face...Can't they see it in my face!!!
What is my face telling them? What's it telling you?

Baldino feels a realization, a calling bestowed on him that he's terrified to follow through with.

SMITH

That you know...You been touched, compadre...You've
been called...Come ease my pain...scratch my
back, and I'll awaken YOU from the dead...

Baldino retreats back. The residents around John Baldino, and even Brady, turn into walking corpses, their complexion turning pale white, their bodies stiff and mechanical in motion, robotoid arms replacing their human limbs. Smith's mouth moves as he talks, his eyes and face alive, from Baldino's POV.

SMITH

You look too smart to be a mechanic of the
body...You were destined to become a healer
of the heart.

Baldino retreats again. He's trapped in the room, pushes the door, then---it opens, mysteriously, a party outside. An exit possible, finally.

SMITH

The barn door's open for you to leave, or
to stay....

Baldino thinks again.

SMITH

Scratch my back and I'll awaken your spirit...

Baldino approaches, extends his hand out, scratches Smith's back. Smith's eyes seem to 'smile' at John. Smith's face and mouth go back into a comatose, motionless state.

SMITH (v/o)

Thank you.

John looks at his own hand. It glows, magically. Then, the door to the outside hallway closes. The residents in the room freeze.

BALDINO

What do I do now?

Brady comes up behind Baldino, shocking him.

BRADY

Get a haircut, get a tie, get a bath,
and get your ass out of
the laboratory, Mister Baldino. We need
doctors who can think with their hearts.

Baldino smiles, looks at Smith.

SMITH (from his mouth, from John's POV)

I'm sorry.

BALDINO

Sorry? For what?

Smith's eyes, mouth and face turn lifeless again.

BALDINO

What are you sorry about?

SMITH (v/o)

Being alive hurts...Being alive hurts...

DISSOLVE TO

INT - BEACHHOUSE - DAY

Baldino (elder) finishes writing, sweated up, out of breath, his hand shaking, in pain.

BALDINO

(writing)

Being alive...hurts...

The pen drops from his hand.

BALDINO

But it beats being...dead. Or sterile...Soul
dead...The leading cause of death in North
America is stagnation, boredom...or is it misperception
of reality...

Meow of the cat awakens him, pushes box of pills over to him, playing with it. He takes one.

He looks outside. The sun is setting. He looks at his watch. The cat runs to the door, the fishing pole, claws at the door.

BALDINO

Fish for dinner?...Good idea...

Baldino picks up the fishing gear, unfamiliar with it. He opens the door, goes outside.

BALDINO

Fish for dinner...

EXT - JETTY - TWILIGHT

As the sun sets over the ocean, John Baldino has is line in the water. Fish surround the bait, but don't bite. The cat looks on. CLOSE on a jewel that seems to flicker every time John speaks.

BALDINO

Fish for...fish for...Fish, for Chrissake what
are you waiting for!!!?

Johns heart starts pounding. We hear it. It's a strong 2/4 beat, in keeping with the surf, strongly reminiscent of a song Baldino starts to hum, then sing, badly at first, then better, moving the line in tune with the music and the waves.

BALDINO

Boom...boom..I got Sunshine on a cloudy day..
When it's cold (he shivers) outside...I got the month
of...May...

Then---a voice from behind him.

SMITH

May I?

Patient John Smith is behind Baldino, in full fishing gear, his diction still very high-plains Western, his garb and associated skill very much a master New England fisherman. He drops his line into the water.

SMITH

Never thought I'd take ta riding on water,
but the ocean's just open range ya gotta
use another horse to gallop across.

BALDINO

But you...

SMITH

Died?

Smith gets off the peer, walks on the water, then comes back, resumes fishing. Baldino looks at the surf, seeing if there is a trick to it.

SMITH

Guess I did. Either that, or I acquired some kind
of divinity. And in case you wanna try it yerself,
there ain't no rocks under that surf. King Neptune will
gobble ya up faster than a tornado on a dustblown
mesa. Especially if ya never learned how to swim...

BALDINO

How did you know that I...

SMITH

Knowin' things happens to you in my condition.

BALDINO

You died. I remember.

SMITH

Mercifully. I don't know who made the mistake
on the morphine drip, but thank ya....

BALDINO

It wasn't me, Mister Smith.

SMITH

Budd. My friends call me Budd. And what do your friends call you, Dr. Baldino.

Smith keeps reeling the fish in. John keeps having problems.

BALDINO

John...(hold his head, it's aching)

Baldino feels a little dizzy. Smith extends his hand to Baldino, holding him up.

BALDINO

Thanks, Budd, I eh...

Baldino extends his hand to Smith. It goes straight through him---Smith being a ghost. Baldino withdraws. Cat meows, runs away.

SMITH

The scientific explanation, John. I'm dead.
Yer still alive.

BALDINO

But...how?

SMITH

The real question is WHY?

BALDINO

So, why?

SMITH

Doctors always make the worst patients.

BALDINO

And you're my doctor.

SMITH

One of them. And yer first lesson, if yer gonna catch that fish. Go with the flow, but keep a hold of yer instinct.

BALDINO

(getting cerebral, reminiscing)
Professor Wild Bill Brady said something like that...
Keep your ears open to everything, but always

listen to your own drummer.

SMITH

It's gettin' away from ya!!!

Baldino feels a bite, then gets his attention back to the fishing.

SMITH

Give him some line...more...more...not too much, reel him in, let him think it's a mutual endeavor. Let him think he's ridin' you... That's it. Now pull the bit in on that bronc just a hair, a touch, a tug, then a...

Baldino reels in the fish. He's ecstatic..

BALDINO

Got him! Got him! Got...

Baldino looks around. Smith is gone, his large cowboy boots standing on the pier. The cat sits comfortably in one of them.

BALDINO

...Big boots to fill....Let's eat...

INT - BEACHHOUSE - NEXT MORNING

CLOSE on a frying pan, fishbones on it from the night before. PAN to the cat, well fed, belching, then to Baldino, half-asleep at the typewriter, open jars of food next to him.

BALDINO

(muttering, comedic, then repeating it seriously)
And after all is said and done,
Death is bad. Life is good. The rest
are just details...

A hand, gloved, opens the door. The unseen intruder, wearing black-leather boots, comes in, closes door, checks the electrical circuits on the wall. A wire is broken, and is instantly repaired. The intruder checks the food next to Baldino. The cat springs up to the table. The intruder pets the cat, seems to do something with its collar, leans down to look at what John has written. Then---John awakens, seeing the shadow, very defensive against the intruder---which is---Cathy, holding a set of wires and ominously looking plyers. MUSIC on the tape player is BEETHOVEN, reflective and emotionally-intense String Quartet.

CATHY

The electrical wires work the devil's own mischief if you don't keep up with things. No O'Brien lets his renters go through a Point night without electricity. Or run out of food. I see it was to your liking...You cook like a man (smelling it)... And (referring to mess) clean up like one, too.

Baldino starts to clean, but Cathy beats him to it, her hand-eye coordination and gait far more sure than his.

BALDINO

Sorry, I'll...

CATHY

No...It's fine...

BALDINO

No, I'll...

Baldino trips, almost falls down, trying to get a piece of crumbled paper from the floor. She reaches for it. He launches for it again.

CATHY

(very cordial)

A man's job is to work. A woman's job is to...

Baldino grabs the crumbled papers he wrote, coughs, takes an inhaler. Cathy goes on to cleaning the other mess in the place---and it is appreciable.

CATHY

...stay out of a man's papers. We respect people's privacy here at the Point. Not like the landlords you're accustomed to in New Jersey.

Baldino pours himself a cup of coffee.

BALDINO

I'm not from Jersey.

CATHY

You certainly sound like you do, Mister Baldino. And sure as Saint Peter will sent Queen Victoria back down to purgatory, you smell like a Jersey boy.

BALDINO

(taking whiff of himself)

Low tide, wet sand, long walk...But with a little
more pepponi and bus fumes,
it could be ode de Secaucus.

CATHY

Secaucus, did you say now?

BALDINO

Still the smelliest exit on the turnpike. And I'm
from New York, not New Jersey. New York,
New York, a hell of a town, a long time ago...

Cathy eyes the books in his suitcase, a large volume of biomedical texts, with his name as author.

CATHY

What kind of doctor are you, Mister Baldino?

BALDINO

The kind who promoted himself to being a Mister
while I'm on vacation. A neurologist who's trying to
understand the brain that beats inside my chest (heart).

Baldino pours a coffee for Cathy.

CATHY

You wax poetic like a mad Irishman.

Cathy sips the brew, frowns.

CATHY

And make coffee as bland and boring as the bloody English.

BALDINO

Yer right...Coffee's supposed to be rich. So you
can eat it with a spoon.

CATHY

Or drink it like a man?

Cathy unlocks a cabinet, well hidden. She takes out an old bottle of whisky, very vintage stuff. She pours a bit into his glass.

BALDINO

I don't know if I should...

CATHY

It's been in my family for generations.
It'll get ya drunk only if ya let it...

BALDINO

I'm writing here..About madness, and
madness is best enjoyed straight.

CATHY

Or together. Between neighbors.

Cathy pours some of the brew into her own coffee. She has the look of intense sexual interest in her eye.

BALDINO

Freinds you haven't met yet?

CATHY

You can do better than that, Doctor Baldino.

BALDINO

John...

Baldino puts the coffee down. Cathy sits down, then gets absorbed into talking, walking around the room. As she does, John's eye is drawn to the next poem. CLOSE on his eye as his voice over of the poem drowns out Cathy's chatter.

CATHY

(gradually fading out)

My Uncle Shamous used ta say that
there ain't nothin' more valuable than
a horse that'll hear the brains in yer
feet, and man who'll listen to the music
in yer heart. And there ain't nothin'
worse than a woman who just keeps
rantin' on in the presence of either
one. Like my Aunt Mary, could
outtalk any auctioneer twice as
fast and three times as loud. Rambled on,
and on, just talkin about herself, motorin'
off with the mouth. Complainin' 'bout
men...how all they did was to put
down people. All the time, just puttin'
down people. Like Sean O'Casey, loser who never

held down a day's work in his life. Then, there was Sean Cassidy, who thought he was Sean Connery, the only resemblance being that bald spot in the middle of his fat, ugly head. And Sean the football player who never quite explained why he had that cheerleading getup in his locker...

BALDINO

(voice over/gradually fading in)

Poem number 2...CASE HISTORY. A
37 Year Old Female with a 4 by 4 centimeter mass.

He takes a photo out of his pocket. It is of an attractive model, on a yacht, JASMINKA, smiling. John's eyes merge with hers. Then, on John's eyes, Jasminka's eyes replacing his. Then, another face around the eyes.

INT- HOSPITAL BED- DAY

ZOOM OUT from Jasminka's eyes to her face, revealing that she's been subjected to severe chemotherapy, muscle tone gone, face pale and hollow, hair all but gone. She's looking at a photo on the wall opposite her, the photo of herself a few months earlier, as young and attractive, with here her well-meaning girlfriend, SUSAN. Susan is puts more photos of that kind on the wall, her other hot-looking girlfriend next to her. BEEPING of ECK monitor in background.

Jasminka can't speak, only grunt---knowing what she's lost. John Baldino, now a MED STUDENT, watches, as he adjusts I.V, takes notes from chart, takes vitals (blood pressure, pulse, rates very weak hand and leg reflexes, empathizing with her condition and pain).

SUSAN

(very Long Islanttttdee, with gum chewing)

The pictures just came back from the photographer.
I told him, watch the red. You know how
you fuck up the photos when you let the red bleed.
And I love the way you did your hair...You're so...

Susan's friend nudges her.

SUSAN

Blonde...Hey, with a wig and some implants...
Dolly Parton should look so good...And speaking
of lookin' good, check out the boner under yer boyfriend's
jockstrap. Honey, if that ain't love, I don't know what is...
And they say the

John looks under the hospital gown, sees breast gone. Winces--it grosses him out, particularly the smell.. Jasminka sees him wince, grunts in terror at him. He tries to hide the emotion with a smile.

SUSAN

She's gonna be alright, Doc? Right?
Right? All that chemo and radiation therapy
and all these tubes..Jasminka's gonna be
okay, right?

BALDINO

Right.

Jasminka knows it is game over. Baldino looks at her file. It reads, "Mass removal, grade 4 tumor, prognosis grim". His eyes say it. Jasminka nods. She knows it, too. Susan continues to put more photos up, rants on, thinking she's doing a great job of cheering Jasminka up.

SUSAN

And look what else I got...From the photoshoot
in Mexico. You never looked better. A twenty out
of ten, and every publisher from New Haven to
Fort Lauderdale is gonna know it, if yer
personal agent here has anything to say
about it..

John subtly moves a partition between Jasminka and the photos. Jasminka nods a 'thank you', uttering it in the best language she can.

BALDINO

Yer welcomed.

But Susan has more photos, plastering them even closer, continuing the rant. Baldino takes a breath of indignation, about to say something. But Jasminka nods "no" to him. She moves her eyes up to the ceiling and extends her hand out to John.

Her hand feels like death. He's initially afraid, pulls back. She pulls back "it's okay" she grunts. Then, John sits back down, takes the hand.

John and Jasminka communicate with their eyes as she fades away, face getting paler and more skeleton like. With each step closer to death Jasminka takes, John's face also looks older, and wiser. Then, finally, when death takes over, from John's very moved POV, Jasminka's face takes on the appearance of the angelic beauty she was a fashion model. John's 90 year old face cracks a smile, then turns youthful again, then---horrified---

As the ECG monitor flatlines, Jasmika's face turns into a skeleton, the face of death. John's eyes see horror. He removes his hand from the bedside, seeing that it has been transformed into a glowing hand, held into a fist. Inside the fist, a bright light---a magic gift so bright it blinds him.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT- JETTY - SUNSET

The bright light in the hand has now been transformed into the sun, setting over the horizon. John is at his stand, fishing, the cat by his side.

JOHN

It's just a dream, Prometheus. Or what
ever you want me to call you.
A dream that became my reality...
Reality is over-rated, anyway,
right? Just because Jasminka
died from that lump in her breast,
that don't mean I'll die cause a this
lump in my knogin, right? (cat meows)
Labs make mistakes, right? (cat meows) And
well motivated
patients---and doctors---always
get better. I wrote that, so it
must be true. Right? Right?
(desperate) Right??!!!!

Baldino spots a superattractive SURFER GIRL, back turned to him. His interests turn to matters between the legs rather than between the ears.

BALDINO

Right...Can't be all that sick if I can
still see beauty in that....

The surfer takes a wave in---she's an artist on the wave, a primo ballerino on King Neptune's glassy wall of ferocious water, waving top him.

BALDINO

...or that.

Cat meows.

BALDINO

Hey, I saw her first.

Cat turns his head, rolls his eyes.

BALDINO

Yeah, I know. They all do. But this one...

The surfer waves him in, gets off her board, offers it to him.

BALDINO

The cat can't swim.

The cat runs to shore.

BALDINO

I can't either.

SURFER

(from distance)

As long as you're moving, you don't sink....

BALDINO

Huh? I can't hear you!!!

She swims in, taking the next wave, repeating what she said. Then, finally, Baldino recognizes her---the face morphing into someone he knew in the past. To John, she is Jasminka, especially when he splashes water on his life-weary, and old-looking face.

BALDINO

Jasminka. Jasminka, the supermodel.

SURFER

Maybe in a past lifetime. My name is Mary, now.
Just a Mary. What's your name?

BALDINO

I'm a John. For real...John Baldino. Doctor John
Baldino, M.D., Ph.D., etc. etc...

SURFER

And I think I like you. John. Don't know
why. But gotta follow yer instinct...

She sees a perfect set of waves coming in from the horizon.

SURFER

And QUEEN Neptune (the ocean)...

She swims out past the break, leaving a surfboard near the jetty. John sees the board, Contemplates, sees Jasminka's face in that of the surfer girl, reaming of vitality.

JOHN

You gave me life, I guess I owe you my...

John gets into the water, nearly losing the board. But it is pushed to him by another hand, that of his Brother Vincent, who appears, then disappears. Boldly, John gets on the board, paddles out and sees a large, perfectly shaped wave. Jaminka takes it, locked into the curl. John smiles, then looks out again. An even bigger wave--more perfect. He looks in the ocean below him, at his reflection. He sees his father and mother's reflections, giving him the thumbs up. John paddles out, takes the swell in.

Jasminka, on the beach, smiles with pride, swims out and grabs hold of the wave.

With John on the wave on the board, Jasminka/surfer girl works her way around him, taking off her top.

SURFER GIRL/JASMINKA

Looking good, Doctor John.

BALDINO

Feeling better.

Baldino grabs hold of the wave as it increases in size. Then, we hear CHEERS. Jasminka bails out of the wave, then disappears beneath the waves.

From the beach, well-beyond the peer, tourists take pictures. Cathy notes it as well. Baldino is making history riding the wave of the year, with style, and finesse.

As John pulls out of the wave---SPRAY and FOG between him and a cameraman from a newsteam.

DISSOLVE TO

INT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Fog gives way to a set of bright eyes in a mirror. They are John's. Around him, auras---spirits behind him, some white, some black. A bloody hand picks up a single edged knife with a large blade. Blood drips into the sink. Then, on the eyes again---John's firm, the ghosts disappearing. He unfogs the mirror. The source of the blood is his face---in the process of shaving his beard off, moustache remaining. Half is on, half is off. He keeps going, hand trembling, due to the neurodisease.

JOHN

So...Hair does get blood vessels in it if you let

it grow for twenty years...Or was is fiveteen...or...

He notes a scar under his left eye.

JOHN

From that fight in Cyprus in front of the Russian embassy...Or was it the slip on the ice when I was seven at the Chinese delegation ball in...

A small light in the mirror flashes on and off as he speaks. He looks up, suspicious. Then, it stops.

JOHN

Maybe some sulfuric acid that got splashed up at Manhattan College when I was looking up Veronica Lebinski's skirt instead of the lab manual...

He looks up. No flashing lights. Cat comes in.

JOHN

Just because everyone's out to get you is no reason to be paranoid, right? But I got me an excuse this time. A lump inside the head. Astrocytoma type III, grade 4. I almost did my thesis on that...Then I got interested in what makes people tick instead of what makes tumors do what they...

The door opens. Behind it, Cathy. John turns around.

CATHY

(surprised)

Doctor Baldino?

JOHN

Don't people KNOCK before coming into a room here? Or is that just another 'thing we don't do' at the Point?!!

John wipes his face, a bit embarrassed.

CATHY

You turned your aging clock back a decade or two...

JOHN

Yeah..Maybe the health clock, too.
I don't know...I got curious...
The shaved head thing is just too Buddhist.
Bald may be beautiful when yer under thirty,
but over forty, it can become a permanent
fact of life...
And not even an ex-Catholic Italian thinks
about going (with hair) blonde, redhead or green---the
most ugly color ever created.

CATHY

Spoken like a man who's never seen
the Emerald Isle! I don't know whether
to pity you fer yer ignorance or knock
some sense into ya.

JOHN

But some things...Seeing the naked...
The vulnerable...The scars...
Just one of those things
I wanted to do before I...ya know...

CATHY

(sensing something ominous)

...Get older.

JOHN

Yeah...One of those things on the list
of things you do before
get older...

John picks up the straight razor again. He drops it, picks it up, looks at his wrist. Cathy takes it from his hand, apparently thinking that he will use it for shaving.

CATHY

No...Latino youth looks very distinguished
on you, Doctor Baldino.

JOHN

Then I shouldn't, ya know...(take the moustache)

CATHY

(stroking his cheek)

Certainly not before your appointment at six, tonight.

JOHN

What appointment?

CATHY

My place. We Irish CAN cook more than
potatoes, cabbage and corned beef. My address, John.
(hands him a peice of paper, scribbles something).
Six-ish.

Cathy takes the razor, puts it in her pocket.

JOHN

Eight-thirty?

CATHY

You have another date?

JOHN

(looking at rising sun)

I don't know yet....

As John looks into the rising sun, his voice goes into the next poem. LIGHT get bright,
then complete dark. Then---

DISSOLVE TO--night sky outside hospital room.

INT- HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

A middle-aged man, BOB "POWERHOUSE" KLEINMAN, lays in a bed, counting
numbers, refering to the stars.

KLEINMAN

Alpha andromidus, two hundred and thirty light years.
Boraius Theresis, one hundred and ten light years.
The North Star, two thousand and six light years,
the speed of light being 180,000 miles a second,
the number of miles per minute, being 60 times
that at 8.2 million miles a minute, by 24 hours
a day at 18...6, yes, 186 miles a day...what day is it today?

Young Baldino takes reflexes. Kleinman is completely paralyzed, hands and feet.

BALDINO

(very tired)

Tuesday, I think...

KLEINMAN

You have that 36 hour shift look in your
bloodshot eyes, Doctor Baldino.

BALDINO

It's still Mister. And it's been 38 hours....

Baldino empathies with Kleinman as the rest of the exam continues.

KLEINMAN

(struggling)

Which makes it sixty minutes by ten seconds by...
365 years in a day which is...Ahhhh!!!!

BALDINO

A long time...Thirty-eight hours by sixty minutes...

Kleinman can move his fingers a little, using them to calculate.

BALDINO

by...60 minutes a second, making it...

Baldino takes out a pocket calculator.

KLEINMAN

thirteen thousand, three hundred and eighty...

BALDINO

(a second later)

Got it.

KLEINMAN

I designed those calculators. The day they can
outthink me is the day we're all in big trouble...
What day is it?

BALDINO

Tuesday?

Kleinman looks at his watch, above him.

KLEINMAN

My watch stopped. On a Sunday...Does that
mean something?

BALDINO

That you didn't build the watch, Mister Kleinman?

Baldino looks at the watch, then Kleinman's chart.

KLEINMAN

What does that chart say? And you call me by my real name Powerhouse Bob. What does the Chart say?

BALDINO

That all motivated patients get better, Powerhouse Bob.

KLEINMAN

That's medical bullshit, Doctor Baldino. All well-motivated PEOPLE get better. Stop calling us patients, and we'll show you what kind of people we can really be.

Baldino tries to elicit a voluntary action from Klienman---nothing.

BALDINO

We have the best odds for recovery from spinal cord injury in this hospital than any in the City.

KLEINMAN

If you're going to be good businessman, you have to be smarter than the numbers, DOCTOR Baldino. The progression, 4, 14, 23, 34, 42, what comes next?

BALDINO

(ponders)

I don't know...I can't...

KLEINMAN

Fifty...You must have taken the A train ONCE in your life.

Baldino gets a good laugh.

KLEINMAN

Fourth street, fourth street, twenty-third, thirty-fourth, forty-second, fiftieth, fifty-ninth, seventy-ninth...But let's be practical. Even Albert Schweitzer had to buy test-tubes and penicillin for his patients in China.

BALDINO

Africa...Albert Schwietzer was in Africa. And he used quinine, not penicillin.

KLEINMAN

You're dumb with numbers and manners, Doctor Baldino.

BALDINO

Sorry.

KLEINMAN

A real man doesn't lie, cheat or apologize...
Though woman will find ways of
making you do all three at once...Got
a girlfriend?

BALDINO

My work.

KLEINMAN

Either you got a girlfriend that's making you
lie to yourself already, or you got no life and NEED
a girlfriend. Either way, yer gonna need money...
Pick up that newspaper?

Baldino complies.

KLEINMAN

What's the Dow at today?

BALDINO

Three hundred and ten.

KLEINMAN

Yesterday it was at 210, day before at 190,
the week before that, at 330...The week before that...
I was on the floor watching it do a....
(goes despondent)

BALDINO

The graphs look like sine waves....Sort of....It all
looks so mathematical...

KLEINMAN

Only if you know how to respect the mathematics...

And stay ahead of the numbers, and the odds...
(long range angst)

What kind
of numbers and odds do you have in your life?

BALDINO

I got twenty bucks.

KLEINMAN

What's my cut if I turn it into two hundred by
next week?

BALDINO

Thirty percent?

KLEINMAN

Fifteen. But for you...ten, because it's Tuesday.
Pick a stock, any stock..What's it at today?

BALDINO

AT and T at 15.5.

KLEINMAN

And yesterday.

Baldino searches stack of papers.

BALDINO

13.5?

KLEINMAN

And if I guess right, it was 9.5 the day before?

BALDINO

Close enough...

KLEINMAN

Pick another stock...

BALDINO

Texas Instruments...at 12.6, yesterday at 24.5...?

Klienman keeps trying to move his fingers,. using them to calculate the numbers, with
much effort.

KLEINMAN

Tomorrow, Texas Instruments at 28,
the next day 34, then a dip down to 22 by
Monday--unless Mexico decides to take
back the Alamo or start negotiating on NAFTA
again...You taking this down?

FADE OUT as SUN rises.

DISSOLVE to RAIN Falling down.

EXT- JETTIES - TWILIGHT

Rain pours from the sky. Baldino is out there, on schedule, with fishing gear. Cat stays protected under a tarp.

BALDINO

Here, fish! Ghosts. Demons. Angels. Whoever.
Whatever. Ghosts of Christmas' past, present,
future...it there is gonna be any future...

Then...Thunder. Cat runs inside. Baldino holds his ground, and his line, then the ocean swells up, throwing up a wave that knocks him down.

INT - BEACHHOUSE - DAY

Next to the typewriter, a note---"Cathy's Place, 8:30."

The door slams as the clock above the ledge reads 8:25.

INT - CAFE - DAY

Rain pours down the windows of a place, "Kate's Diner." John is at the payphone. Clock above him reads 9:15. A TV is on above the counter, showing John surfing, and other local events.

JOHN

No Cathy O'Brien there...I'm sorry...
No, I already have a date tonight...
Thanks anyway, you have a nice voice, too.

He hangs up, goes through the phone book. Cat meows.

JOHN

I know, three million years of evolution, three
years of medical school and a residency in the
best training program in the NorthEast and

moron Doc here forgets to put the directions
in a waterproof pocket...But it's not all
my fault.

No O'Brien's listed in the phone book--see? But...
the sign says Kate's Dinner, and that's
the eighteenth Cathy, Kathrine or Cathleen
on the Point.

Maybe she spells it with one
of those creative female ways, like with
three Y's on a happy day, and two K's on
an angry day, or on a beautiful day...

John notices a very attractive waitress, SUSANNA.

JOHN

She...she looks familiar...Yeah, I know,
they all do, but...It's past sunset, and
each night so far at this time...

Susanna smiles John's way. Cat meows again.

JOHN

Naw...she can't be...Powerhouse Bob
was great with numbers, and she don't look
like she can count the number of boyfriends
she had last...

Susanna makes change for customers, amidst chaos, instantly adding up the bill with
precision. The first (I) is a tough guy amongst his street buds. The second one (II) is a
street-punk looking for a free meal.

CUSTOMER I

Hey, my our waitress left...Without leaving us the
bill.

CUSTOMER II

She quit, dude.

CUSTOMER I

In MY day, ya gave notice before ya quit.
No honesty today...What do we owe you (to Susanna)
for three coffees and a donut.

SUSANNA

Table two...(Customer I)
Three BLTs, two fries, shrimp cocktail, three
coffees and a vanilla milk shake and quiche for you,
Sir....Thirty-five dollars and seventy one cents...With
6.2 % sales tax, and
the customary 1.5%
contribution to the Spinal Cord Injury Foundation,
that comes to Forty-two twenty seven...

Customer II (Punk) gives her the thumbs up, skating out the door. She pulls him back.

SUSANNA

The Godfather Pizza with olives, chocolate ice
chip ice cream and peanut butter...comes to...

CUSTOMER II (Punk)

But I ate it all from the same plate...

SUSANNA

Seventeen-twenty-two...including tax.

The Punk shakes his head, empties his pockets. No money.

SUSANNA

Then it's three hours and forty minutes of
washing the floors...from the other rollerbladers...

CUSTOMER II (PUNK)

What if I take you for a ride and...ya know...

He whispers into her ear. He's impressed with himself.

CUSTOMER II (Punk)

You're gettin it fer free...Huh Hah...

SUSANNA

Six hours...And you wash the toilets with your tongue.

She tosses him a mop.

CUSTOMER II (Punk)

Never tried that before...

Punk leaves. John approaches.

JOHN

You're a real Powerhouse.

SUSANNA

And you're the...surfer guy on the tube...
I think. Why are you looking at me like
that?

JOHN

The skill with numbers, the balls to stand
up to people, the Spinal Cord Foundation
contribution tax. Reincarnation always leaves
something behind. I bet your middle name
is Roberta, but your friends call you Bob,
Powerhouse.

SUSANNA

No...they don't.

JOHN

Black, strong with no sugar.

SUSANNA

Sir?

JOHN

Coffee. Black, strong, no sugar.

SUSANNA

Coming right up.

JOHN

How old are you?

SUSANNA

Old enough to call the cops if you keep asking.
Or my older brother.

JOHN

And how old is he?

SUSANNA

Nineteen. He's in the Marines.

John sees Vincent's reflection in the spoon.

JOHN

(getting dispondent)
Yeah...My brother joined up when he was
nineteen. Me, I went to college. I still wonder
who got the wiser education. And who got the
life that...mattered most. The life lived, in the
places of change...

SUSANNA

Hey...

Susanna's voice jolts John. Vincent points upward to the TV. Susanna puts coffee in front of him.

SUSANNA

Should I call you a cab?

JOHN

Naw... Not yet. But ya can turn up the volume
on the tube. That okay?

SUSANNA

Yeah, sure.

Susanna leaves. Cat races in, next to John.

JOHN

It's okay. She's with me....It's nothin'
like what you think, I'm Italian. We
let the Greeks do the beastiality
bullshit. We do...other bullshit...Could
you change the station?

Susanne folds her arms, defiant.

JOHN

Please? I'll be good. Television's the
best babysitter in the world, and before
you stands a rich baby.

John puts a large bill out on the table.

JOHN

Well motivated psychos always get better...
or published...

He looks up at the tube--shocked.

JOHN

Or...aired?

On the tube---Bob Powerhouse Kleinman, using his arms completely, interviewed by Larry King.

KLEINMAN

Well motivated people always get better, and smarter. Especially when it comes to managing their money, and directing their wealth to what they want and need, and not just getting more money...

JOHN

I know that guy!

SUSANNA

You and six million other viewers in the tristate area. Powerhouse Bob Manalio.

JOHN

I knew him when he was a Kleinman.

SUSANNA

He had some legal problems?

JOHN

Turn it up.

SUSANNA

Is there something wrong with your hearing, Sir?

JOHN

It's Doctor! And turn that up!!!

Susanna complies.

SUSANNA

That's as far as it goes.

John has trouble hearing. He gets up, moves to the screen, very close up. Cat sits at the counter, drinks his coffee.

KLEINMAN (on TV)

The mathematics of making money is easy,

but planning your life around that money---that's the hard part.

JOHN

His hands. He's using his hands.

SUSANNA

Manalio. Money. Media. Italians talk with their hands.

JOHN

(with proud Italian gestures)

Yes. Yes. Yes!!!!

INT - BEACHHOUSE - MORNING

John wakes up, notes in hand, prepared to write the next chapter. He walks to the table, sees a spread of magnificent food on it. It is a banquet, with a note on it.

JOHN

Dear John. This would have tasted really great with the right company last night, but I guess Doctors are used to cold in their lives....My mistake, your loss.

Cathy enters the room, dolled up. John folds up the note.

CATHY

So...what was her name?

JOHN

Knocking? I paid for some privacy here.

CATHY

The back door was open. I didn't see your car.

JOHN

I parked it on the other side of the house.

She looks.

CATHY

Oh...So you did.

JOHN

I lost your number, and tried to call but...

She looks at the wiring. More loose connections. She fixes them.

CATHY

The wiring in these places always needs fixin'.
Must have been an Italian contractor who built it.

JOHN

You look different today.

CATHY

What kind of different?

JOHN

A ya know, good kind of different.
A sort of hot kind of different, too,
if you don't mind me saying so.

CATHY

Thank you.

JOHN

Got a hot lunch date?

CATHY

Apparently not...And you look like
you have work to do, Doctor
Baldino.

JOHN

My most jealous mistress.

CATHY

I hope you'll be very happy together.

She prepares to leave.

JOHN

What did I say?

CATHY

A man married to his work. Not again.

JOHN

Hey! People are my work.

CATHY

So, my feelings are a project to you.

JOHN

No.

CATHY

I'm another one of your literary experiments, then?

JOHN

No.

John grabs her, firmly and fondly.

JOHN

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

CATHY

Are you married, Doctor Baldino.

JOHN

And if I were...

CATHY

I'd still say what's on my mind!!!

JOHN

Which is what!!!?

Cathy hugs John, very warmly. She kisses him, on the lips. He goes to kiss her back, but she pulls away.

CATHY

I think I love you, John.

She grabs her coat, prepares to leave.

JOHN

So why are you eh...leaving. I got coffee.

CATHY

And a mistress.

JOHN

She (papers) can wait.

CATHY

No...she can't....

Torn between staying with him and leaving, Cathy storms out the door. John pulls out the next poem, nearly stumbles. He takes a pill to stabilize himself.

JOHN

Ten pills left. Ten poems left to read.
Ten fish to catch...First and ten...

John hears in his head a FOOTBALL GAME. Then the next poem, then...

INT - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Football game on the tube, a player making a stellar run against all odds to score the winning goal. The player, JOHN NEWCASTLE, has a big smile on his face.

NEWSCASTER

What are you going to do now, John Newcastle?

NEWCASTLE

Go to Disneyworld?

On Newcastle, as an outpatient in the room. He's more subdued, less physically fit.

NEWCASTLE

Get my meds, like a good boy?

NURSE calls in...

NURSE

Mister Newcastle?

Newcastle gets up. He has trouble walking. He is guided through an archway reading "Multiple Sclerosis Research Clinic". Cheering of the TV on superbowl champ running through a tunnel, juxtaposing current situation.

INT - EXAM ROOM - DAY

Newcastle is helped in. Waiting for him, Baldino, a little more established, now an intern. His back is turned, asking Nurse for drug to give the next patient as part of large clinical trial.

BALDINO

Vial number 15, patient number...
35.

NURSE
No. Patient 145.

BALDINO
No..Number 35. The best running
back in the NFL. And after
he gets these supermeds we've
developed in the lab he'll..

Nurse 'shhhs' Baldino.

BALDINO
Sorry, Mister Newcastle. I'm not
supposed to tell you that yer
getting the real stuff. Clinical
trial rules. But...

Baldino injects a despondent and hopeless Newcastle.

BALDINO
This made mice with denuded
axons run faster than a rock
star from an undercover
nympho narc. And stronger
than the New York Giants
offensive line, not that the
way they played last week
wasn't offensive to every
New York fan they once had.

NEWCASTLE
I wouldn't know, Doc.

BALDINO
We'll get you back on the field
before you can say...what do
you say, anyway?

NEWCASTLE
Insurance settlements...

BALDINO
Insurance settlements?

Baldino assesses Newcastle's functions---measuring nerve conduction velocities on his arms, feet and back with an oscilloscope--high tech stuff. Results are encouraging.

NEWCASTLE

Do they cover wheelchair expenses?

BALDINO

IF you need one, sure, but---

NEWCASTLE

---And the new jobs for the handicapped program.
And I eligible for those?

BALDINO

Your nerve conduction results---Very promising today! Which I didn't tell you if anyone asks, or I'm off this research project and get assigned back to the---

NEWCASTLE

---Commercials. Can I still do commercials?
From the neck up, that is.

(motioning with healthy and fairly mobile hands)

BALDINO

Assuming the unlikely event that these drugs don't work, and assuming that your body doesn't obey the laws of biology, and assuming that---

NEWCASTLE

---Multiple Sclerosis commercials, Doc.
A warning to not get what I got.
Don't smoke, drink, do drugs, do the wrong women, do no women, whatever you think kids shouldn't do, I'll say I did. I'll donate the money to the hospital.
Gotta do somethin when I become a cripple. Deal?

Newcastle extends his hand out.

BALDINO

(discouraged)

Deal.

Baldino shakes Newcastle's hand.

EXT- JETTY - TWILIGHT

John is out on the stand, looking at his watch as sun sets.

JOHN

Come on, ghosts of Solstice past, present
or whatever. Tempus fugit. That means
time flies, to you dieties who don't speak
Latin.

(to sky)

Time flies. Time flies!!!

Feeling shake of his hand, his tries to stabilize it--the hand with his watch on it seems to be bleeding---the watchband seeming to be a tourniquit that digs into his wrist, cutting off his hand. Frustrated, and in pain, he rips the watch off, tossing it away. Underneath, his hand is NOT bleeding, as he thought it was. He breaths a sigh of relief. Then, from the beach, a familiar voice, more raspy than usual.

NEWCASTLE

Hey! Is this watch yours?

Baldino turns around. On the beach, combing the sands for garbage, Newcastle.

NEWCASTLE

Is this watch yours?

BALDINO

John Newcastle?

NEWCASTLE

I'm supposed to ask if this watch is yours.

BALDINO

You're alive!

Baldino touches Newcastle to verify that he is real.

BALDINO

A real life person. Come on hit me back.

NEWCASTLE

Huh?

BALDINO

Come on, hit me!!! With everything you got!

Newcastle hits Baldino. A punch that makes Baldino double over.

NEWCASTLE

I'm sorry, Sir. But you asked me to---

BALDINO

That's okay. It hurts. It hurts so...good.
My drugs worked. We got your body back
from the disease. Just like I told you.

NEWCASTLE

I guess this isn't your watch. I'm supposed to
ask....

Newcastle pockets the watch, moves on.

BALDINO

And it's great to see you. Walking, seeing,
punching. Come on, go out for a pass. I always
wanted to throw a pass to the great John
Newcastle.

NEWCASTLE

I don't do that anymore.

BALDINO

A hundred bucks says you can't catch this pass.

NEWCASTLE

A hundred....

Baldino takes beach tar, sticks it on to a football-shaped piece of driftwood and attaches a
C note to it.

BALDINO

I'll go right, you go down and to the left.

Baldino runs. Newcastle does the same, very fast, very impressive.

BALDINO

A healthy body leads to a healthy
mind, and a healthy spirit, and a healthy...

John sees something disturbing.

BALDINO

...life?

Newcastle's attire looks familiar all of a sudden. It prison garb, a cop leading the rest of the 'chain gang' down the beach. Newcastle walks back to Baldino,

NEWCASTLE

Five years, not life...Not yet, anyway.

Baldino follows the chain gang.

BALDINO

What happened?

NEWCASTLE

Bad booze, bad drugs, bad marriage
bad attitude...lots of bad. And after all
that good medicine you pumped into me, too.

Newcastle finds another piece of garbage on the beach. It's an old sweatshirt, with his number 35 on it.

NEWCASTLE

Guess this belongs to you now, Doc.

A Guard clears his throat.

NEWCASTLE

This, too.

Newcastle gives Baldino back the C-note. Another clearing of the throat from the guard and the watch gets returned.

INT - BEACHHOUSE - MORNING

White super position: Fish # 5. Sitting at the typewriter, frustrated, facing a blank page, Baldino. Poem number five is next to him. (INSERT POEM, with his v/o)

BALDINO

Now, I can see where this page is going...

He crumbles the page on the typewriter up, tosses it into a large can already overflowing with failed first pages. Cat meows. He dials up Cathy's number, gets the machine.

CATHY (on machine, Irish music
in background, very up voice)

This'd be Cathy O'Brien, leave a message
from you to me,
and what will happen,
we'll both see...

Baldino hangs up.

BALDINO

(working from depressed to rage)
Where is she? She's supposed to clean
up this place, right? Men make the mess,
women clean up the mess. Then yell
at us fer makin' the mess, because the
only way to change the orderly disorder
of this fucking world is to make a goddamn
fuckin mess!!!!

Baldino kicks the waste basket, exhausts himself. The room starts to spin. Cat comes in.
To ground himself, he grabs hold of it. The animals gets scared.

BALDINO

It's okay....Like I told every girl
friend and third year medical class,
the blood between my teeth is my
own...

(looks in mirror)

...for real this time. Another five minute
break. No...AM radio...three and a half (minutes).

Baldino turns on the radio. Coming in, really loud, "Desperado" (You better let
somebody love you before it's too late").

He switches the dial.

BALDINO

Too Western...

Next tune, "Jefferson Airplane"--"Don't you want somebody to love, you better find some
body to love..." He switches dial again.

BALDINO

Too retro...

Next tune, "White Rabbit"...(One pill makes you larger and one pill makes you small...)
He changes dial again.

BALDINO

Too...personal, and accurate...

Next announcer, a Health Food commentator.

COMMENTATOR

Brocholli is the most perfect food. It's green,
cheap and scientific evidence shows that
eating two helping of it a day, keeps the
cancer away...(con't)

BALDINO

It's worth a shot. Maybe mix some of their
self-interest-driven science with my
ego-driven science (his pills)...magic...

Baldino opens the refrigerator. He sees Brocholli, starts to eat it, when...STATIC on the radio. Then...it's a hot, sexy voice, doing Revolutionary Rap, the voice of ERICA FISHER-BERGER. Baldino nods his head, he screams. He hates rap, but its the only thing on any frequency. He resolves himself to listen to it, finding himself moving to the beat.

ERICA

We interrupt this broadcast to tell you all
About the way the empire will fall.
No bombs and guns
Or tanks and planes
Big Bro will kill you
by drivin you insane.

Boredom and stagnation,
Are stranglin' the nation,
Some one on the top and someone on the bottom,
Ain't the way it has to be, so we gotta try and stop 'em.

Dull Out Virus is what's exported,
By big time losers who thing
THEIR important...
They get you grovin'
to drinkin', dopin' and screwin'
And get your minds off the REAL revolution.

John's drawn to the lyrics.

Yeah, all you JOHNS,
Facing BALD truth without a DOC.
Madness is best enjoyed straight.
And leads you to a better place.
If ya stick to the narrow,
Not talkin bone marrow.
The mischeif of today ain't the revolution of tommorrow...

Static comes in again. John struggles to get radio back.

JOHN

She DOES sound familiar. Who the hell
is that? Who are you!!!????

ERICA

And if yer hurtin' head still achin'
Hear THIS doctor's education.
Trust yerself, not yer drugs,
And for Buddha's sake, avoid the....

STATIC replaces the warning, then "Onward Christian Soldier", blasting out, with a preacher's sermon. All the rest of the radio stations are back to normal, cras, tacky commercials on each one. He yanks the radio of the socket. John comes to his senses, types away, inspired.

BALDINO (v/o)

The writers on St. Elsewhere said
that we're trained to know HOW
patients die, but not WHY. The crucial
question, though, is....

INT - HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Window above street where there is a festival, very artistic and expressive, Mardi Gras in Manhattan. Watching it, young Baldino, now a respectable Intern, studious and reflective. Next to him, NURSE ANDREA DIAMANTIS, very attractive, and far from studious.

BALDINO

...Why are we alive? And what does
it mean to be alive? Life is good. Death
sucks. Maybe all the rest are just
medical details. Are we...am I...
becoming a medical detail? A soul-dead,
medical---

ANDREA

---I didn't know a human body could do that?!!!

BALDINO

Do what?

ANDREA

Do it Greek style and tantric...wow!!!!

BALDINO

What's Greek style? What's tantric.

ANDREA

If you have to ask, you're not ready for it, Doctor Baldino.

Baldino finds himself looking at Andrea's breasts.

BALDINO

John. I'm ehh...John...

ANDREA

Okay? But the first one's free. The second one too, if I still like you.

Andrea takes off her sweater, then proceeds to go the rest.

BALDINO

What the...

ANDREA

---It's two AM and we're both on break.
Your eyes say tired, not virgin.
You are definitely not gay.
I know you're not married, and...

BALDINO

(admiring the anatomy)

Fuck me...

ANDREA

I'll get to that...

Baldino takes his jacket off, puts it over Andrea. She rolls her eyes.

ANDREA

John. You've been after me for as long
as I've been after you.

BALDINO

Yeah, but...we're...ya know, professionals.
Priests, ya know?

ANDREA

You got the Brady 'calling' speech.

BALDINO

The what?

ANDREA

(mocking Brady)

"Being a doctor is a calling, not a profession.
We have to stay focused on our patients,
their pain and our mental discipline all the time.
Fun is for commoners, not healers."

BALDINO

It's true...Look at where Brady is!

ANDREA

Chief of Medicine, five kids, all his
own, conceived naturally. And he sees
the hospital shrink three times a week.

BALDINO

On cases...

ANDREA

(looking at watch)

On the count of ten....

BALDINO

Huh?

ANDREA

My offer to ressurect your pathetic
soul with this body that your disciplined
mind is so detached from...five seconds
left...

BALDINO

Wait. I have to...

ANDREA

Three, two...one. Goodbye John.

Andrea turns around. Baldino pulls her back, hard and desperate.

BALDINO

Sorry...I didn't mean to be so...

ANDREA

Rough?

BALDINO

Hungry...

ANDREA

Let me feed you...

Andrea seductively leads John down the hall into a small room. She puts a sign on the door, saying "Radioactive Materials inside---Do Not Enter". Rumbblings from inside----

DISSOLVE TO

INT- BED - DAY

John wakes up, whip cream all over him, covering his genitalia. After the event. Andrea shares a cigarette with him---

JOHN

That was...

ANDREA

Delicious?

Andrea's breasts are covered with whipped cream.

ANDREA

You still have room for dessert?

JOHN

(looking at her eyes)

Oh, yeah...

ANDREA

I like that...

JOHN

Like what?

ANDREA

You're looking at my eyes, and not my,
ya know...

JOHN

Maybe because I...eh..., ya know...

ANDREA

Wanna spend some more time with me?
Your eyes to my eyes.

JOHN

Yeah. Eyes to eyes...

They move close to each other---real chemistry, for passionate kiss.

ANDREA

There's something I have to tell you.

JOHN

You're an alien from another planet?

ANDREA

No...

JOHN

You want to recruit me into the Greek Mafia.

ANDREA

Not this week.

JOHN

You were a guy back in 1969...

ANDREA

John....I'm leaving.

JOHN

What?

John pulls back.

JOHN

Something I did? Something I didn't do?

She looks at the clock, gets dressed.

ANDREA

Tommorrow. I'm going to Europe.

JOHN

Where?

ANDREA

I don't know.

JOHN

Why?

ANDREA

I'll find out when I get there. Everything here stays the same, and life is change.

JOHN

How?

ANDREA

Plane tickets. I have two of them.
I want you to come with me. Or
I'll come with you... We'll figure that
out when we get there...

JOHN

We have patients. Responsibilities.

ANDREA

To stay Alive, John. I don't want
to see you die like the other
Docs here. I want to be Alive,
in places that are Alive, with
someone who wants to be
Alive, too. Life is change, John.

She fondly kisses him, gives him a plane ticket.

ANDREA

Kennedy Airport, two-thirty.

EXT - JETTIES - DAY

Elder Baldino, looking very scholarly, and old, hold his fishing line. In his hand, the plane ticket.

BALDINO

To flights not taken...

He puts the ticket on the hook, prepares to cast it out.

BALDINO

And freinds who became travelled,
experienced and ...Alive...

Just as he pulls on the line, Baldino feels the tug. He turns around. The line is stuck on the rocks, going THROUGH Andrea. She is youthful, backbacks and travel bags with stickers from all over the world, but she is dead---and her beautiful features scared with cuts, bruises and needlemarks.

ANDREA

How've you been, Doctor John?

BALDINO

Andrea?

Baldino rushes toward her.

ANDREA

No...stay back. Death is contagious. They tell me that. But they didn't tell me if this (ticket) is still good. Think I can cash it in? I had some money problems.

BALDINO

And some people problems?

ANDREA

They don't tell you that what keeps the 'hip' journalists going is top level coke, not top level pay. Musicians think with everything from the neck DOWN. Art dealers deal themselves, not art. I tried women for a while. It's easier to love women, but harder when you break up. When you get older, you need loyalty more. Then you need younger blood around you

that's always less...loyal. Particularly
when the thugs who call themselves
Police come looking for you in....

BALDINO

Where were you?

ANDREA

The places of change. Death is stagnation.
Life is change. Right?

She starts to hurt again, then a tear falling down her cheek. It turns into blood.

Baldino moves in to help her.

ANDREA

Stay back, John! Please!!!

BALDINO

What can I do?

ANDREA

Survive. Then Live. You visit the
places of change in here (pointing to
her heart)...and there (pointing to
his head).

Andrea starts to bleed, fainting.

BALDINO

Andrea. Don't go...Don't...

A large WAVE comes over the rocks, throwing Baldino down. When he emerges, he sees the plane ticket remaining only, with a postcard. It reads---From Andrea, with Love, no return address. John clinches his fist in frustration. Cat meows, pointing to a fish below his feet, caught on the line.

John picks up the fish. Takes it in.

INT - BEACHHOUSE -DAY

John sits at the typewriter, looks at new poem/picture. Cat meows, calls his attention to the mail. Amongst the junkmail, a green paper bag, from "Luck of the Irish" cafe. Radio plays another "Erica" special, "Back in the Saddle Again" sung in Italian.

BALDINO

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned...
Or an Irishwoman pissed off..

He opens the bag, singing along with the tune in his native Italian, then finds inside the bag---a surprise.

BALDINO

What do you know? Jewish bagels.
French cruellers. Chinese eggrolls.

Baldino tastes them all----very good. Then, a knock on the door. He freaks. The next knocks feel louder, a thunderous echo. Baldino approaches the door, fearful, hallucinating, then opens it. To his surprise---Cathy, overloaded with more food, looking even hotter than ever.

CATHY

I didn't know what you liked, or needed. Can I
come in?

From Baldino's perspective, she looks like a dragon.

BALDINO

Yeah...sure...

Baldino helps her with food, unpacks it. Cathy looks at the radio---suspicious and weary of the voice.

CATHY

A writer needs junk food to keep him
going, right?

BALDINO

In the stomach and out the hands.

Cathy looks at John's hand--his left, and the wedding ring on it.

CATHY

You said you were married to your work,
not another---

BALDINO

(touched, very secretive)

---Woman?

Cathy sneaks a look at the photo, looks again at the radio, as the song switches to "Tristan Und Isolde", tender and intense Wagnerian love theme, Erica singing the libretto.

CATHY
Your wife, Doctor Baldino?

BALDINO
We're...separated...

Cathy sees letters in his stacks.

CATHY
"Dear Jennifer", dated from a long time ago.

BALDINO
And today.

CATHY
Does she answer you?

BALDINO
Soon...very soon.

ZOOM in on Baldino's eyes.

INSERT POEM

INT - RECEPTION HALL, WEDDING - DAY

Italian wedding, rousing dancing going on. At the center of it, the best dancer, and NOT the bride, JENNIFER, attractive, small-framed woman, circa 24 years old. Watching from the side, with admiration---John and his brother Vinny, both in their mid-twenties. Vinny has a beer in his hands, very drunk. John has a club soda, a sober and scared eye looking at Jennifer with inner yearning.

VINNY
Great beer. Great food. Great bods.

Vinny pinches the ass of an attractive babe going by. He gets slapped for it.

JOHN
What are you doing, Vinny?

VINNY
Fishin' for lobster.

Vinny extends his hand out to another attractive woman.

VINNY

Or...shark...

He gets rejected by an upperclass snotty eye-roll. Another woman passes by, even hotter looking.

VINNY

Or...barracuda.

JOHN

With a penis. Cousin Sal went a little (waves his hands in gay manner) and decided to bring his own date. Uncle Vito wanted us to keep it private--no pun intended.

Sal's transvestite date smiles at Vinny.

VINNY

Thanks. I owe you one, Brother John.

JOHN

Brother John. What do you think I am, a monk?

VINNY

Not the way you're looking at Jennifer. The best fuckin catch in the ocean. You had her in your net once. And I know you want to dance with her down here, and upstairs in the coat closet.

JOHN

I just like the way she dances.

VINNY

So dance with her.

JOHN

Doctors do surgery, save people from the clinches of death and, on good days, win biological arguments with God. But we don't dance.

VINNY

When do you have to be at the hospital, Dr. Schweitzer?

JOHN

In exactly an hour and...

Vinny trips John, pushes him, forcing him into the middle of the dance floor, in front of Jennifer. He's forced to face her. She makes the first dance step. He awkwardly follows, but he's very stiff.

On Vinny, commenting loudly from the sidelines.

VINNY

Come on, Doctor Frankenstein. You're dancing like a fucking Canadian. The feet are supposed to move off the floor.

CLOSE on Jennifer, her eyes communicating primal passion and love to John.

JENNIFER

(softly)

Like this...

Jennifer leads with a few more steps, then the touch of her hand. John is transformed, going from stiff and non-musical to becoming the center of attention on the floor with his new partner.

At the end of the dance, someone throws a bouquet. It lands in between them. John looks at who threw it---it was Vinny. Getting back at Vinny, John motions to Sal's transvestite 'girlfreind' that Vincent is interested in him. Vinny is aggressively asked to dance by 'her' as the band strikes up "YMCA" by the Village People.

EXT - JETTIES - TWILIGHT

John fishes at his post, continuing to sing "YMCA", somberly. The cat bobs its head, jumps up on John.

JOHN

No, this dance I do....alone.

John notices something on the cat's collar---a strange device that looks like a microphone.

JOHN

Strange...Cats looking like lions. Fish looking like people. Flea collars looking like bugs...

He gets back to fishing.

JOHN

But I think I got the hang of this now. Fishline
in the water, answer from the other side of the
rainbow...But sometimes, some questions
shouldn't be answered. And some letters shouldn't
be either...And some memories, left alone.
A clean break is a clean break.

John tosses the letters into the water, takes his fishing line out, leaves. A pristine face of Jenny appears in the water, calling John's name out. The surf muffles the voice then distorts the image.

John turns around, takes his wedding band off, considers tossing it into the ocean. Then, a loud burst of wind. John puts the ring on the cat's collar.

JOHN

Christmas present to be opened December
26th.

He walks toward the beachhouse.

INT - BEACHOUSE - DAY

John wakes up, looks at note on fridge. Turns on radio, but nothing there. He looks at table---finds a basket of chocolate, featuring a rabbit--that starts to sing "White Rabbit" in Italian with its mouth.

John shakes his head, looks at the note on the fridge.

JOHN

(reading the note, Cathy's voice)

"Tried to fix the radio so you could hear
words instead of static, but give an Irish
mechanic a wrench and a car engine and
he'll build you a great potato farm. Build
great stories today. You're a great man. A
special one, too. Love, spelt L O V E,
Cathy."

John looks at the rabbit, the song getting louder.

JOHN

A little lower on the volume.

Rabbit's song gets louder still. John takes out his pills---two pills left.

JOHN

My antipsychotic, anti-tumor, anti-death meds, developed in my
lab, definitely not FDA approved.
The last two pills on this side
of the rainbow, for MY....

John takes the pills. As soon as he does, rabbit stops singing.

JOHN

...hallucinations.

He takes a bit off the rabbit's ear, the left one, looks at the next poem and photo, talks to the rabbit.

JOHN

I wish this "John Smith" was a hallucination...
And not a nightmare.

He takes out an old newspaper ad.

JOHN

"A man identified as John Smith of Jonestown, New
New Jersey walked into a bar in Manhattan this evening
and opened fire on a holiday crowd. Six people were
killed and ten injured before the assailant was
shot by an off-duty officer. The motif for the killings
was unknown."
But, according to an anonymous woman identifying
herself later as his mother, "he was such a lovely
boy."

CONTINUE POEM (#7), then ZOOM IN on John's eyes.

INT - EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

John Baldino is doing a physical exam on a PRISONER, JOHN (P.J.) SMITH. The man looks feeble, remorseful and hurting, bound up by restraints that are interfering with Baldino's exam. Two POLICE GUARDS, a SERGEANT and a PATROLMAN are in the room, heavily armed. Assisting Baldino, a large ORDERLY.

Baldino tests his eyes with a pen light. Orderly takes notes.

BALDINO

Pupillary reflexes normal and consensual. No nystagmus or strabysmis. Eyes apparently...normal.

A 'moment' happens, Baldino seeing something human and hurting in the Prisoner.

BALDINO

Lift your hand, please. And clench my fist.

Smith's wrists hurt.

BALDINO

Can you loosen those cuffs?

SEARGENT

One notch.

Baldino repeats the test. It still hurts to respond.

BALDINO

I need---

SEARGENT

---to move on, Doctor Baldino. The Judge needs to see him in forty-five minutes.

BALDINO

And the hangman in an hour.

SEARGENT

He's a prisoner.

BALDINO

In here he's a patient.

Baldino hits the patella (knee cap). Reflex kicking of legs is stopped by constraints on the legs. Then, a pool of blood on the floor. It comes from several places that are still bleeding.

BALDINO

Shit...

SEARGENT

What!!!?

BALDINO

I'm going to have to stitch up those bleeders or you'll be carrying him into courtroom in a wheelbarrel...or a coffin. He's tied up like a pretzel.

P.J. SMITH

And thirsty, Doctor Baldino.

SEARGENT

We have strict orders.

BALDINO

And so do I...from Mommy Nature, who says that I can't do a physical, neuro or psych evaluation, or personal history on a dehydrated pretzel.

SEARGENT

He had a glass of water outside.

BALDINO

Well maybe he needs another one.

P.J. SMITH

Something with some sugar in it...Please.
Something with...(getting weak)

BALDINO

A can of soda from the machine down the hall.

Seargent sends his patrolman out.

P.J. SMITH

(very dry throat)

Two...Two glasses, Doctor Baldino. Please.

BALDINO

That's your cue, and this is my examining room, Officer.

SEARGENT

We'll be right outside, Son.

BALDINO

(sarcastic)

Thanks, Dad.

Baldino clears his throat, points to restraints.

BALDINO

My shift, my examining room, my responsibility.

Begrudgingly, the Seargent loosens some, but not all of the restraints.

SEARGENT

We'll be right outside, Doc.

BALDINO

And we'll be inside, Seargent.

Baldino sets to stitching up the open wounds on PR Smith, assisted by Orderly, approaching with a needle of local anesthetic (Andre). Smith is terrified.

BALDINO

This is Andre, big bear with a gentle touch.

AND THE ONLY READABLE NOTES
ON THIS FLOOR.

I'm John...and you are...?

P.J. SMITH

Thirsty...Can I have a glass of water?

Baldino nods. Andre fetches a glass of water, drunk down with much gusto.

BALDINO

What year is this, (looking at his chart) John?

What year is this, Mister Smith?

P.J. SMITH

Nineteen seventy-five...Was I right?

BALDINO

Off by a year, but so am I when I write checks.

That is when I have money in my account.

P.J. SMITH

What bank?

BALDINO

My job to ask the questions, your job to
answer them. Where are

you from, Mr Smith?

Smith is getting more relaxed.

P.J. SMITH

I ehh....ehh...

BALDINO

Your accent says Long Island, not Jersey. South Shore, Mr. Smith?"

P.J. SMITH

Yeah, Doc. You from there, too?

BALDINO

For a few years I lived on the Island, yeah. South Shore.

P.J. SMITH

Let me guess, Doc. Rockville Center, Valley Stream..

BALDINO

Two more stops.

P.J. SMITH

Oceanside. Gotta be Oceanside.

BALDINO

Long Beach, Mr. Smith.

P.J. SMITH

I knew it, Doc. From the moment I saw ya. What did you do there when I was a kid?

BALDINO

Looked for women, did some Eastern surfing and California dreaming.

P.J. SMITH

Hey, me too, Doc. I surfed the South Shore too.

BALDINO

Hey, no kidding? What beach?

P.J. SMITH

Wherever...

BALDINO

Me, too, Mr. Smith.

P.J. SMITH

John. So, Doctor Baldino, did you become a doc to get good dope or cause yer mother said that SOMEone in the family had to become a doctor?

BALDINO

It wasn't anything I mentioned at the interview. And I'm supposed to be in charge of this interview, Mister Smith.

P.J. SMITH

Hey, Doctor John. What's yer favorite show?

BALDINO

MASH. Why do you ask?

P.J. SMITH

Don't get defensive at me!!!!

BALDINO

I wasn't. Was I?

P.J. SMITH

(becoming sincere)

No...It's just that it's good to galk to someone who cares about what I really am. And what made me listen to that thing inside me that made me kill all those...How many people did I...?

BALDINO

Six dead, ten injured. Four of them are upstairs.

P.J. SMITH

Can you save them, doc? Can you take something out of me to put into them to save them?

BALDINO

I don't know. I'd have to...

P.J. SMITH

Please, Doc. Give them my arms, my legs, my eyes, so I don't have to look at what that monster in me....

Smith starts to break down in tears.

BALDINO

I'll do what I can.

P.J. SMITH

Can I have a Pepsi. From YOU. Those cops will poison me....I'm sure, they'll...

BALDINO

Sure...Back before you can say "psychiatric referral"..

Baldino leaves the room. Smith sneers a smile as the door closes, looks toward Andre behind him.

EXT - HALLWAY - DAY

Baldino grabs a Pepsi from the machine, then hears screaming from behind him. He looks. Falling out of the opened door is Andre, cuffed and slashed in the neck with a scalpel. Smith, with a shit-eating grin, waves to Baldino at the head of the stairway, in a doctor's uniform, blood on his hands. Baldino is speechless. Cops after Smith, who makes a getaway down the stairs, pursued by lots of guards. Many shots are fired.

EXT- JETTIES - TWILIGHT

John at his stand, a vengeful look in his eyes, line in the water.

BALDINO

The last shots got you. That I AM sure of, Mister Smith.

From the water, a voice, that of Prisoner Smith.

P.J. SMITH

John...

Smith is in a liferaft, with no oars, well provisioned. But he's older, and very lonely--and remorseful.

P. J. SMITH

My friends call me John. My enemies, too.

BALDINO

What's it like where you are, John?

P.J. SMITH

If you got food, your health, you got everything, right Doc?

BALDINO

Yeah.

P.J. SMITH

WRONG! You have the potential for everything. But it's hell if you have no one to share it with. You're the first person to talk with me in...it seems like a thousand years.

BALDINO

(no eye contact)

I'm not talking with you, Mister Smith. You are dead, gone and buried. So is the schlep who let you slash Andre's neck open.

P.J. SMITH

You saved him. You did great work, Doc.

BALDINO

(no eye contact)

I'm a new man now.

P.J. SMITH

So am I!!! I've repented. I've spent...every moment since it all happened on this raft, with no one to even break bread with... All this food and no one to... Share a submarine sandwich with me, Doc?

BALDINO

(eyes still looking away)

Go to hell, John.

P.J. SMITH

Please!!!

Baldino looks Smith's way. Smith is hurting, physically. He's bleeding, too, shaking.

Baldino looks to his side. Appearing, mysteriously, a medical bag.

P.J. SMITH

The medicine you have in that bag
is real. And so is my pain.

The surf gets rougher.

BALDINO

Paddle over to me.

P.J. SMITH

I can't. You have to swim here.

BALDINO

I can't swim. I can't...

Smith screams in pain again. More shakes, more bleeding. Baldino braves it, dives into the water. He swims over to the boat, puts his medicine bag over the side, then looks inside the raft---the drugs in the bag are duplicated many times over. Smith sneers a smart-assed grin.

P.J. SMITH

Just what I need. More dope.
But one dope too many.

Smith pushes Baldino away from the raft, into a clear line of a shark coming in. Smith laughs as the tide pulls him out to sea. Baldino sees the shark approach, screams in terror then---FADE TO BLACK.

FADE TO WHITE then,

INT - BEACHHOUSE - COUCH

John wakes up on the couch, badly injured, a glowing hand over his forehead. He is terrified. He looks up, sees Cathy there. She is the angel of mercy, tending his sores and bumps and cuts.

CATHY

Rocks against flesh in a Doctor who
can't swim makes for a big mess
on my furniture, John.

BALDINO

What? When? Where?

Cathy kisses him on the forehead, very tenderly.

CATHY

Promise me you won't love me.

BALDINO

Why?

CATHY

Because I know that I love you. God help me.

She gets up and leaves. Baldino gets up, looks around, goes to the table. Assertively gets to the next poem. One more pill left. He takes it, tosses container into the can. Gets to reading the next poem, and writing the next story.

BALDINO (voice over)

On depression, the inverse of anger,
the inevitable result of the chain of evil
being propagated and maintained.

INSERT POEM

EXT - PARK BENCH- SUNSET

Park bench overlooking the scenic New Jersey Palisades, a magnificent sunset. At the New York side, HARRY STEINER, mid-twenties, overweight, introverted but well-meaning expert in self-sabotage and depression.

Harry opens a letter from Stanford University Political Science Division, admissions dept, nervously.

He looks at a letter in his hand from Stanford University, reading "Congratulations---You have been accepted with full scholarship to our graduate program." He breaths a sigh of relief, then smiles, then panics. Then---a mid-twenties Baldino appears, bringing fast food from a hotdog stand for both of them. Harry closes the letter quickly before Baldino gets to see it.

BALDINO

God, that's a beautiful sunset. A work of art, all those colors, musically meshing into each other. And it's free for everyone, every day.

HARRY

Did you know that if you wanted to defend Fort Lee New Jersey against attack, you could still hold off an amphibious army of a thousand guys with M-16s for a week with two WWII machine gun nests.

BALDINO

Shhhh....Do you hear those birds?

HARRY

Seagulls. INSERT LATIN NAME. The only reason why they're here is the garbage in the river.

Baldino admires some of the birds in flight against the multicolored sky.

BALDINO

They fly like hawks, or eagles. One flick of their wings, and they can go anywhere... mag-fucking-nificent.

HARRY

(getting into it)

And if you put anti-aircraft guns in the Palisades caves, even French 15 millimeters, you could hold out against any helicopter in the American or Russian army for a week, maybe two.

BALDINO

Will you look at the sunset Harry!!!

HARRY

You could use the defense that was done at the Alamo. A hundred and eighty four Texans against 6,800 Mexican soldados. General Santa Anna could have gone around the Alamo, but since it was taken from his brother less than a year earlier---

BALDINO

---Harry!!!

HARRY

Some historians think the battle of the Alamo was about defending stolen gold, though. Not honor or even ammunition that Sam Houston could have---

BALDINO

---Harry!!! The sunset!!!

HARRY

What about it?

BALDINO

It's over.

HARRY

Damn, I missed it again.

BALDINO

You also missed your birthday party yesterday.

HARRY

Did I? I'm on this new medication. It makes me forget things.

BALDINO

Except things like how many people DIED at the Alamo.

HARRY

(depressed tone)

History without wars is boring. Like Canadian history. No wars, just everyone agreeing with each other---except at a hockey match when a game breaks out between the fights. But what do you expect from a country that goes to bed at 9:30, where dancing to music is something you do withOUT moving your feet, and the national brew is luke warm water.

Baldino laughs.

BALDINO

Good ones, Harry. Fan-fucking-tastic satire.

HARRY

Did I say something funny?

BALDINO

Yeah, you did. You made me laugh.

HARRY

What is laughing, anyway? The physiology of the process is interesting. We don't see animals do it, but we still thin we have to do it. The social function of laughter, according to most political historians, in the East and the West is---

Baldino shakes in frustration, takes his orange drink and pours it onto Harry's thigh. Harry gets up, startled.

HARRY

What are you doing?

BALDINO

Making you move!!!

Baldino discovers the letter. He is thrilled.

BALDINO

This is---

Harry takes back the letter.

HARRY

---private.

BALDINO

Full scholarship to the best poly-sci program in the country, AND a teaching job after you're finished. Way to go, my man. No, fellow Doctor Ph.D. man.

Harry sinks into depression again, despite Baldino's exaggerated hand and arm gestures of 'way to go, guy'.

HARRY

Maybe they're lowering their admissions standards, and I'll wind up as the smartest guy in a department full of morons. "I wouldn't want to be part of any club that would have me as a member." Marx, Groucho. 1935, I think.

BALDINO

Harry. You can finally move out of your parents' basement, and into your own

place in California, and see the sun setting
over the ocean instead of New Jersey.

HARRY

And if I'M not smart enough for THEM, what if I get
found out?

BALDINO

You ARE going to Stanford, right? You'll have money.

HARRY

(up, then down)

Yeah...I would. Unless I spend too much
and go into debt.

BALDINO

Women. Blonde, hot and available.

HARRY

(up, then down)

Yeah...But they might get in the way of
my career.

BALDINO

A way into the loop of people who
write the political science books, instead
of just reading them. You'll be
king of history at Stanford instead of schlep of
everything in Yonkers.

HARRY

(very up, then down)

Yeah...But absolute power does corrupt, absolutely.
Any real historian knows that.

BALDINO

So you're not going.

HARRY

You think I shouldn't.

BALDINO

I think you should think of something besides
different ways to self-sabotage your life.

HARRY

My therapist says the same thing. Just last week,
he said...(ad lib)...

Baldino shakes his head, listening to another depressive rant that he knows will go nowhere.

EXT - JETTIES - TWILIGHT

John has his line in the water, his eyes on the bound book he has now written. He is depressed. The cat is his only companion.

BALDINO

Writing is always writing. But publishing is
...timing, and connections. Besides you,
my brother Vinny, missing in action in
one of those places no one ever gets
found, no one else will understand this,
or even try to read it. Not exactly New
England Journal of Medicine material,
not readable to the patients---or people---
in the office waiting room, either.
It takes an average of five point two years
for a hard-working writer to become a published author.
I've got....according to the shakes, tremors and
lack of feeling in my legs, about six days.
If Cathy would, could...no. She's got a brain,
a stubborn gut, but she's a woman,
and most women want a gentle read.
This one's hard to write. Maybe even
harder to...

From outside the breaker, a woman's voice, an attractive STARLET.

STARLET

Doctor John!!!

John looks, and sees the woman on the bow of a boat---she's a super attractive babe,
definitely upscale Hollywood. Behind her, Harry, a very successful producer, clearly in
charge of the steering wheel, his life, and an entire branch of the industry.

HARRY

John!!! Where the hell have you been
all these years?

BALDINO

Are you dead?

HARRY

I don't think so.

Harry tosses Baldino an issue of Variety. Baldino reads it.

BALDINO

This is you? You're in charge of three production companies?

HARRY

And a publishing company. I thought you knew.

BALDINO

Harry...I meant to keep in touch but...

HARRY

I know, I forget to call, then you forget, then we, ya know...it happens. But you, you don't look so good.

BALDINO

And you look....happy. What happened?

HARRY

Your friendship was the best medicine I ever had. Sorry about taking it after...ya know... we lost contact.

BALDINO

No problem, but---

HARRY

---What are you writing?

BALDINO

Memoirs? A manual on using the heart-bone? Asswipe for the medical school library? I don't know yet.

HARRY

Who's your publisher?

BALDINO

Mother Nature? Father Time?

HARRY

Send it to my office. I'll get it through.
If it's not what the public wants, I'll
make them want it. That's how it works.

BALDINO

(fondly reminiscent)

Absolute power corrupts absolutely?

HARRY

Yeah. But it's good to be the king.

(gets hugged by the babe)

Mel Brooks

is a friend of mine. He doesn't mind if I steal a line
from him every now and then. But I get on the
ass of my writers for being lazy. Don't make me
rewrite YOUR book, Doctor John.

BALDINO

Did you write that book you wanted to write?
"The History of the World the Way it Should have Been".

HARRY

Damn straight. See it, do it, then teach it. The medicine
business isn't that different than the writing business.

BALDINO

Yeah...But

Where did you come from? How did you find me
here, now, after all these---

Harry is interrupted by a phone call on his cell.

HARRY

Yeah...Yeah...Okay...

Harry hangs up the phone.

HARRY

Gotta go. Keep in touch, and keep on truckin'
John.

Harry buzzes off in his boat. John runs out to the edge of the jetty, stops short of the
ocean, is stopped by a large wave, then another fish in its wake. John looks at the
manuscript.

JOHN
(affirmation)

Yes.

He looks at Variety, Harry's credits and praises throughout it.

JOHN
(solemnly happy)

Yes..

Harry's boat zooming down the coast, the attractive babe on his arms, a big smile on Harry's face.

JOHN
(very happy)

Yes!!!

INT - BEACHHOUSE - DAY

John at the typewriter set on the kitchen table, glancing at the next drawing of the next person on the list, "Fish 9".

JOHN
(cynical)

No...no...

He is dizzy, shaking, only one hand operative, the other shaking very uncontrollably.

JOHN
(fearful)

No...

He turns defiant.

JOHN

No...no...no...

John ties his bad hand down to his knee, keeping his good one going, and typing.

JOHN
To the proposition that it is cool to be cruel...?
Cool to be cruel....

DISSOLVE TO

INT - ER - DAY

Busy ER at night, Baldino looking at wound on the head of a man just brought in, MICK FERNANDEZ, a very scared, and loud drug-lord. Baldino does a neuro exam, looking at eye reflexes. An attractive first year med student, VERONICA, helps out Baldino. She makes very seductive glances and gestures his way. He's very tempted, but pulls away, sort of.

BALDINO

...Maybe...Maybe we won't have to operate, Mister Fernandez.

FERNANDEZ

Where's the guy who shot me in the head.
I want the guy who shot me in the head!!!
If I die, I'm gonna kill him. I swear fuckin hell
of I die, I'm gonna kill that son of a---

BALDINO

---Betadine on a sponge, and a cue tip, please.

Veronica gives Baldino a sponge filled with iodine solution, opening up the cue tip seductively with her mouth and tongue. She smiles seductively. Baldino smiles back, politely, and tempted. Fernandez sees someone behind him, a man in a faded leather jacket.

FERNANDEZ

Is that the asshole who shot me and stole all my money, and my dope. And offed my best friend!!!

Fernandez, with the rest of his strength, reaches for a scalpel, but is stopped by Baldino, then a severe bout of dizziness, and another splattering of blood from his head..

Baldino stabilizes the wound, the leather-jacketed 'assailant' being a Priest.

BALDINO

Whoever it is, he's a great shot. He missed the optic nerve AND the brain stem.

Fernandez gazes down at the floor.

FERNANDEZ

Blood. Is that mine? Looking like it has Gambini's face in it!!!

BALDINO

Guess that means he can see.

Fernandez notices Baldino's wedding ring.

FERNANDEZ

And I want my dope back. It cost me twenty times whatever you paid for that wedding ring. And my crew's out there someplace. They're family, and family's family. A life for an eye, and a head for a tooth.

BALDINO

First health, then revenge. We have a rule about that in this hospital. According to the books, you should be blind, brain dead or screaming in a lot more pain.

(to Veronica)

A cc of lidocaine local, neat.

FERNANDEZ

No pain killers, neat or sloppy.

BALDINO

It's gonna hurt. It's also going to make my job a lot tougher.

FERNANDEZ

This ain't tough. Wanna see tough? This is tough. So is this...this...this...

Fernandez shows off a scar on his chest, then other parts of his anatomy, gradually getting the attention of the entire room, including a fascinated Veronica. Baldino's job of doing the job gets tougher as Fernandez moves, bleeding profusely. He's also getting a bit jealous of his patient, attracting all the babes.

FERNANDEZ

This is tough...this is tough and this...

Fernandez shows off his genitals.

FERNANDEZ

...is for her.

Veronica smiles, very wide. Baldino makes the last stitch, ensuring that it hurts.

FERNANDEZ

And this....

Fernandez reaches into his jacket pocket----apparently for a gun, to use on the insolent Baldino.

FERNANDEZ

Is for you, Doctor...Baldino.

Everyone pulls back as Fernandez 'draws' on Baldino. Baldino stands his ground, acting as a shield to the scared, former Fernandez-fans, behind him. The gun is not a gun at all, though. It is a bag.

FERNANDEZ

Pure, prime shit. From my own private stock.

Fernandez takes a snort of it.

FERNANDEZ

For the Doctor who brought me back to life.

Fernandez puts his arm around Baldino.

FERNANDEZ

A round of applause for my man, Doctor John Baldino. The only egghead in here with balls and brains.

Fernandez intimidates the room into giving Baldino a round of applause. Not complying, Dr. Bill Brady, cautiously watching the young Baldino.

BALDINO

(to Fernandez, quietly)

There's something we have to talk about---

FERNANDEZ

Payin' up. No problem. For you...you...you...

Fernandez pays off most everyone in the room, then gets to Baldino.

FERNANDEZ

And for you.

Fernandez gives Baldino his card. Veronica is now super-impressed with brave Dr. John.

FERNANDEZ

You come on my yacht anytime. With your wife. Not this Barbie-doll slut (Veronica). I respect a man loyal to his family. And this family man, Mick Fernandez, is gonna even some scores against his family, right now.

BALDINO

...With the law.

FERNANDEZ

The guys who get paid in checks instead of cash?

BALDINO

Please.

FERNANDEZ

For you, Doc. I will consider it. But only for tonight. My word as a family man.

BALDINO

Good. So I can go home to my wife, if I still recognize her.

FERNANDEZ

Tonight, you can go home to your wife. You can all go home to your wives, husbands (to a gay orderly) or whatever. The streets will be safe tonight. A Fernandez truce, called in honor of Doctor Baldino.

Fernandez leaves. Baldino's left holding the bag of coke. Bill Brady comes to Baldino.

BRADY

Dr. Baldino. Proposition. Is it cool to be cruel.

BALDINO

For a little while (looking at bag). As long as you enjoy your madness straight.

Baldino, imitating a gangster walk, gives the bag of coke to Brady, who sniffs it. The old physician is curious.

Baldino takes a drink of water. He looks at his watch, falls asleep on the chair next to fountain.

DISSOLVE TO

INT - ET - LATER

Baldino's watch moves ahead by 20 minutes. ER has geared down for a quiet night. Then, abruptly---GUNSHOTS. Baldino wakes up, horrified at what he sees at the door. Three gangkids are brought in on stretchers, badly wounded. Another two on bad dope, shaking. Accompanying the group, a cop.

COP

Fernandez went on the warpath again,
against everybody.
Drugs, bullets and knives. It's gonna be
a long night, folks.

The ER reves up for full battlegear.

EXT - JETTIES - TWILIGHT

Baldino casts his line out, hallucinating very badly. He throws it on the sand, then the sky, then onto the clouds, laying on his back.

BALDINO

Come on, the law of gravity is supposed to still
work. Come on. Up is still down, down is
up and...

(punch drunk with dilerium)

I am the Walruss. Kukukachu...Kookoo
kachoo. Kookoo, kookoo, koo---

Baldino sees, his back on the rocks, Fernandez. Fernandez is wearing a white suit, carrying a brief case. Fernandez is amazingly subdued, even straight-looking.

BALDINO

You, my friend, are either a Jahovah's Witness
for the blind, or...the only colorful pharmaceutical
rep who ever came into my office...Come into
my office...And answer...one question.

FERNANDEZ

You need help, John.

BALDINO

You the doctor, now? All you ghosts doctors?
You died. I know you died. It was a drug
bust that went bad, and then big boom. Boom

Boooom....

Fernandez blows up, then reappears, his suit turning red, looking demonic, hot babes on his arms.

BALDINO

So, it is cool to be cruel. Like we tell the kids, evil is attractive---at first. A break in the boredom, but if you buy into it...

FERNANDEZ

It only gets better.

BALDINO

Maybe...I am an objective researcher now in a subjective universe.

John moves from one side of the jagged rocks to the other, nearly falling into the threatening surf below.

BALDINO

On the life side of the rainbow, the death side, or...

FERNANDEZ

(sincere)

I have drugs that can help you, John. Your perception can be a kinder reality.

BALDINO

A final reality, a Kovorkian vitamin tablet for exhaustion, tremor...or stress? The first one's free, right?

FERNANDEZ

And painless.

Fernandez opens his case. A whole host of drugs are there, hemlock, cyanide, KCl, all the goodie suicide drugs in gift-wrapped packages.

BALDINO

Ah, what the hell.

Baldino reaches out, then the CAT jumps across his arms, tearing them up. John looks--- he sees a gust of wind come in from a distance. The voice behind it---Jenny's.

JENNY

No, John.

Baldino looks at the ocean below, Vincent's reflection says "no", too. Another look to the other side of the jetties shows John's parents, reflection saying "No". Then, another voice--Fernandez', panicked.

FERNANDEZ

No...No...

Fernandez is being called back to hell, his body withering up from fantastic form to a bag of burnt skin and bones that would be any junkie's worst nightmare, his attractive babes turning into old, ugly hags who tear open his flesh and devour it.

The box of drugs still remains, though. Baldino looks down, picks up a vial of KCl, ready to inject it, then tosses it into the ocean. He then tosses the rest into the surf, to avoid temptation. Out of breath, and exhausted, he looks down. A fish is there, on this hook with a note in its mouth.

BALDINO

Erica! Still 27, 45 or 96. Am...or...

INT- BEACHHOUSE - DAY

Baldino hooks up the radio, frantically trying to get it working.

BALDINO

AM 27, 45, or 96. Come on.

I can rewire a schmucked human brain
but I can't put together a godamn...radio.

Finally, the radio goes on. On AM 27---it's Beethoven, string quartet, solemn and very deep.

BALDINO

Beethoven...

Changes to next band.

BALDINO

Opus 131.

Changes to next band.

BALDINO

(frightened)

By....

INT - CEMETERY - DAY

MUSIC continues, on a tape player. We hear the voice of ERICA FISHER-BURGER.

ERICA

Yehudi Menuind and...

ERICA FISHER-BURGER, attractive woman with long straight blonde hair, next to late twenties Baldino. She is grief stricken, but holding it in.

BALDINO

...other guys, Erica?

ERICA

Yeah, other guys, Doctor Disco man.

Erica looks at the gravestone. Deceased is named Jack Fischer.

ERICA

Think I should drop the Fischer? It makes going into a fast food joint very difficult.

BALDINO

Dr. Erica Burger. How does it sound to you?

ERICA

Lonely. And...

Erica chokes up. Baldino moves close to her, but keeping his distance.

ERICA

No, John. I promised Jack I wouldn't cry at his funeral.

As he moves in, she cringes. He withdraws.

ERICA

It's okay, John. You can touch me, even though I know you want to do a lot more. And right now, I'd let you. Please.

JOHN

I'm married. To Jenny.

ERICA

I know.

Erica moves in closer to John. He puts his arm around her.

JOHN

It's been six months since Jack, ya know---

ERICA

I know.

They move closer together. John hears Erica's heartbeat, as do we.

JOHN

You're the best cardiac resident in the city.

ERICA

So they keep telling me.

JOHN

No one knew that Jack had heart problems, and it's not your fault that you didn't wake up and hear him ya know...

JOHN

So YOU keep telling me.

Erica breaks down, starts to cry, hugs him very tightly, and intimately. John looks up to the sky.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT - NEW YORK STREET - DAY

PAN DOWN from sky to raggedly-dressed musicians playing upbeat Bach on the street. Resident Baldino watches, looking at his watch, holding two fast-food lunches. He taps his foot, nervous, fools around with his wedding band, takes it off, then puts it back on. Approaching, a woman in flaming red hair.

BALDINO

Erica?

Erica is on a mission, the look of distance in her eyes. She is toting a napsack saying "Siberia or Bust".

BALDINO

Fish (from one hand) or burger.

ERICA

That's not funny, John.

BALDINO

Sorry.

ERICA

It's hilarious.

Erica laughs, madly, fear underneath a secret decision she's made.

BALDINO

Something is...

ERICA

Different?

BALDINO

(allured)

Yeah.

ERICA

I damn well hope so.

Baldino sees plane tickets in her pocket as she takes a bite.

BALDINO

Taking a trip?

ERICA

Yeah.

BALDINO

Where?

ERICA

Away.

BALDINO

For how long?

ERICA

For as long as it takes.

BALDINO

You were accepted into the Residency
at Cornell.

ERICA

Yeah, I know.

BALDINO

Best in the country. Maybe the world.
Even the City.

ERICA

So they tell me.

BALDINO

(romantic feelings)

You're the best heart doctor I know.

ERICA

So you tell me, now that....

BALDINO

Now that, what?

Erica takes a flute out of her napsack.

ERICA

The human heart needs healing from
a more...global level. I think. Or
I'll find out.

She kisses Baldino, plays the flute, then moves down the street, her stoic walk evolving
into a dance.

EXT- JETTIES - TWILIGHT

John hums the Bach as he looks at headline in an old newspaper. Headline reads "Award
Winning American Cardiologist Dies in Siberian Nuclear Accident."

BALDINO

Accidents.

Baldino turns a transistor radio on. The music on the station is in the same place in the tune as Baldino's whistling, but with a better, upbeat pounding rock rhythm. He smiles.

BALDINO

Siberian accidents ARE no coincidences.
And coincidences are no accidents. Not
in this part of the....realm of---FORWARD.

Baldino starts to sing with the Bach, then dances on the rocks, defying gravity.

INT - BEACHHOUSE - MORNING

Baldino whistles the Bach tune to himself from the previous night. The cat's collar flashes with the notes, as do a few other devices around the house. One, in the roof, looks like a camera. Meanwhile, objects in the room dance up and down with the melody, from his perspective. He reaches for a batch of homemade cookies from Cathy on the table. Her note reads--"Chocolate Surprise."

BALDINO

And sugar plum fairies...

Baldino takes a bite. The objects move up and down, transformed into chocolate figures, then skeletons. He looks at his hand. It is drenched in blood. It shakes, then becomes paralyzed. The cookie drops from his hand. He looks at the paper in front of him---the only thing that is stable is the photo of Jennifer and the words of the next poem (INSERT POEM). Jenny's eyes talk to him, sparking with love. His reveal terror, horror, then a shrilling scream. FADE TO--

INT - ER - DAY

Big snowstorm outside. The end of a long night at the ER. Baldino falls down on the bench. He's dead tired, exhausted beyond reason, and unkempt. He's also very disturbed, guilt-ridden. He has with him a bag with bottle of ethanol from the lab and grapejuice from the machine.

Dr. Bill Brady comes in, elder and pompous, in coat drenched with wet snow.

BRADY

Dr. Baldino. I heard that you took charge of
the ER, without anyone's permission. You completed
(looking at chart)...twenty-four cases. The Nurses
said you were quite assertive with your authority.

Baldino prepares himself a potent alcohol cocktail.

BALDINO

Big bus accident, bigger snow storm. No attendings,
no chief of surgery, no chief of medicine, no chief
of anything...No Dutch Uncles, No Thesis advisors,
No God, Allah OR Buddha...

BRADY

And no drinking on duty...

Brady takes the drink away.

And where's your tie?

BALDINO

I'm wearing my invisible one. It's choking
my neck. I just need some of that grape
juice to finish the job.

BRADY

You SAVED twenty-four patients, Dr. Baldino.
Brilliantly, I might add. Privately, and, when
I write up my report, publically.

BALDINO

What about the driver? Patient, no person
number 25. (looks at case file). Case # 1234A
(starting to break up)

I did everything right. Everything according to
the books. Everything according to the
way you would. Everything according to the
way...it was supposed to be done. But...
it wasn't supposed to happen. It wasn't
supposed to...!!!

Baldino tears apart the case report, angry. People passing by are startled. Brady fends
them off, knowing that Baldino needs some private time and counselling.

BALDINO

She was pregnant. A month pregnant.
A hell of a way to find out....

BRADY

You couldn't have saved her.

BALDINO

Yeah, I did everything I could. Right.

BRADY

(looking at file)

Yes, and more. But sometimes 'more' isn't enough. We aren't Gods, John. We're doctors. Jennifer knew that. I lost my wife to an accident, too.

Baldino reaches for the ethanol again. Brady violently takes it away.

BRADY

That won't solve ANYthing! I know that as a medical and personal fact. Mental anesthesia is contraindicated right now.

BALDINO

And feeling anger beats feeling nothing at all?

BRADY

For now.

BALDINO

So what should I do, after 'now' is over?

BRADY

I don't know.

Baldino's eye is on a scalpel inside a surgical kit nearby.

BALDINO

I think I do.

Baldino takes Brady's tie, puts it on himself, takes the surgical kit into his pocket.

BALDINO

This stays on. No one else is going to lose their Jennifer. Not on my shift. It starts now, and ends at the grave.

Baldino takes a chart from a passing Nurse.

BALDINO

I'll see this one, this one, and this one...NOW!!!

Brady looks on. He is worried about Baldino.

EXT - JETTIES - TWILIGHT

Baldino's line is in the water, he eyes to the horizon.

BALDINO

Life-shift is over, Jennifer. Do I have
your permission to laugh, to live, to...
be alive now? Jennifer...Jennifer, where
are you? You said you'd come
back! That you would be
reborn to me, for me, for
the whole world...I wrote to you!!!
Every day, but you never answered,
you never...

A burst of wind arises. Letters Baldino tossed into the ocean a few days earlier wash ashore, get caught in a wave, wash up on the shore. They read a name....

BALDINO

MARIA....

Baldino flashes back, remembering something with a smile.

INT- AIRPLANE - DAY

Baldino, very straight and emotionally-inhibited, reading a medical journal amidst a plane full of party-fun people, very attractive and 'hip'. An attractive FLIGHT ATTENDENAT (SONIA) comes up and contacts him.

SONIA

John Baldino?

BALDINO

(eyes on his reading)

Doctor Baldino.

SONIA

Could you join me in the rear cabin?

BALDINO

No, thanks. I still have a pile of reading to do.

SONIA

Please, Doctor.

BALDINO

A medical emergency?

SONIA

A confidential one.

Baldino looks at his watch, marks his reading, gets up, bring his medical bag from under his seat, and walks toward the back, like an old man, following Sonia.

INT - CABIN - DAY

Baldino arrives, expecting to find something routine and personal relating to Sonia, but instead, a real emergency.

BALDINO

Oh shit...

Baldino sees a Mexican Indian woman, in labor, not doing so good. Sonia is doing what she can, but it is very limited.

SONIA

She's on board very illegally, and in big medical trouble.

Baldino assesses, agrees.

BALDINO

How close is the nearest airport?

SONIA

Oh, about 600 knots...

Baldino looks outside. It is all water. Maria moans in agony in her Native language, begging for help.

SONIA

What' she saying?

BALDINO

Help. Save my baby, even if you have to kill me.

SONIA

You speak Yaqui?

BALDINO

I read eyes, fluently. Also, scar-marks.

Sonia notices scars on the woman.

BALDINO

She's more scared of where she left
than where she's going.

More screaming from the woman, than fade into unconsciousness.

BALDINO

What do you have for drugs?

Sonia takes out a bag of drugs from the medicine cabinet. Most of the drugs are illegal.

BALDINO

Medical, not recreational?

SONIA

That's all we've got!!!

Baldino thinks for a moment, then grabs Sonia by the neck, reaching behind her ear. He grabs a pin from her hair, using it to recussitate an acupuncture point below the nose.

BALDINO

Give me my bag...

Sonia gets flustered. He does further diagnosis. Baldino takes over, doing the whole thing.

BALDINO

Just like the last case of
uterine artery trauma. Bus driver in a snow
storm. No more dead bus drivers on
my shift. No more dead bus drivers on
my shift.

Baldino rips Sonia's slip off, using it as a tourniquet. He then rips off his tie, using that.

BALDINO

Alcohol.

Sonia grabs a pile of clean-wipes. Baldino grabs the entire contents of the liquor compartment, pours them into an ice bucket, grabs the instruments he just bought, dumps them into it.

He grabs Sonia's breast, stealing her name tag, with a sharp needle on the end of it, inserting into another acupuncture point.

BALDINO

This needle into this point. Manouver it like this....

Baldino demonstrates an up and down, in and out, motion for the needle.

BALDINO

Like a cowboy riding a hooker on his Vagus vacation...It should dull the nerve endings in the abdomen and open up the doorhatch to the world for the kid inside her. At least according to the paper, and the patients...Come on, ride-em-Sonia...

Sonia gets into the rythm of it. Baldino works his surgical skills against impossible odds, and, after frustrating effort, delivers a baby (FILL IN or AD LIB ad required).

The woman looks at the child---nothing coming from it.

WOMAN

Morta. Morta!!!

BALDINO

No Morta. No Death. Life!!!

Baldino slaps, then works other medical tricks on the baby, brings it to life.

BALDINO

Life!!! Life !!!!

Baldino falls back, exhausted.

WOMAN

(to her baby)

Maria...Maria...Gonzalez

Baldino looks at the Baby's eyes.

BALDINO

Maria...

CLOSE on the baby's eyes.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT - BEACH - TWI:LIGHT

John looks at the letters on the beach, spelling Maria.

JOHN

Maria....

He glances at Jenny's picture. Maria's eyes and hers match.

JOHN

Maria...

He looks up to the sky.

JOHN

A kind hallucination this time. I'll take it.
I don't suppose you'll tell me where Maria
is now?
No, didn't think so.

John walks off the jetties, toward the beachhouse, contented enough, for now. He passes a newspaper blowing in the wind, headline "Maria Gonzales nominated for Nobel Prize in Literature". FADE IN MUSIC--MOZART'S REQUEIM

INT - BEACHOUSE - MORNING

MUSIC on radio, MOZART'S REQUIM. John opens the last of his envelopes---the last poem/photo. He's woozy, one hand paralyzed, the other shaking, but determined.

BALDINO

The last poem...Last story...Last song.
Mozart's requem...So.

(looks up)

Comforting, frightening...
(determined)

Final...It's what you leave behind,
not who you are or what you are.
What you leave...

Baldino's hand shakes, uncontrollably. The sharp tip of the pen starts to mark up, then cut up, his paralyzed hand.

BALDINO

No...The ghosts don't get to write the finale of
this doc's opera. The astrocytoma, oligodendroglioma or any

other oma in my head, either!!!

Determined, he bites the shaking, seemingly-possessed, out of control hand, pulling the shaking hand back, then forcing it to write. He is in extreme pain, singing along with the music. It gives him comfort, then...a revelation.

BALDINO

That's it!!!

He looks toward the cat, in his eyes now a lion, its collar flashing on and off with sound. In each ceiling there is a bright light---a camera lens that turns into a sunburst, from his perspective.

BALDINO

Yeah, I could have had a V-8!!! But now...
a lot more. A lot more. Lights, camera...
New series about a doc who can cross
the life-death line at will, or for
whatever fucking network pays him
the most money, or in the most...
humanity. What is the currency of
humanity, anyway? Drochmas?
Shekles? Rubles? Yen? I spent my
entire childhood going around the world
with two of the most famous secret
agents in history, mom and pop to me,
and I still don't know the Currency of Humanity.
Maybe a man's worth is measured by
how many onions he has...

He takes a bit of an onion.

Or donuts...doubling as a condom for real dumb guys.

He takes a bite of a donut.

Or...cookies...With those little chips of chocolate,
raisons, rabbit terds...

He takes a bit from a cookie, then sings again.

Baldino sings as he writes---the flashes on something.

BALDINO

Hey---I don't know German, Latin,
or whatever language this is in...

Ah...what the hell, heaven, or
whatever..

As the crescendo builds up, Baldino's voice is bold, full and assertive, as he continues to write. Then---a KNOCK at the door. He stops for a moment. Then continues singing. The door opens up, slowly. He feels a shadow coming over him. Rather than surrender to it, he sings louder, writes more ferociously---then. DOOR SLAMS.

Baldino turns around at the 'assailant'. He is huddled under the mess that is the kitchen, protecting the cat and his manuscripts with his life.

A LIGHT comes on. Baldino sees a woman's legs.

BALDINO

Cathy...

A closer look reveals someone else.

BALDINO

Erica?

Erica has determined eyes, a woman on a mission, very hot looking espionage-hippie type. She motions for Baldino to remain quiet.

Using a metal detector inside a "We are the World" promotional Bear-toy, she finds and disarms bugging cameras and microphones all over the house. Baldino is shocked.

Then she stands in front of Baldino and the cat.

BALDINO

Meet Prometheus, my...

Erica grabs the cat, choking it by the collar. Baldino fights her, but is pushed off, hitting the wall. Erica pulls off the collar, pulling apart from it a clever electronic devise.

ERICA

Did you say or write anything about Vincent?

BALDINO

Vincent?

ERICA

Your brother.

Erica looks around, spotting lab reports.

BALDINO

He's dead.

ERICA

Hardly.

BALDINO

But I saw him on...

ERICA

The other side of death? He had a heart attack. Two of them. And you had a brain tumor. At least according to this lab report. Science fiction meant to terrify and horrify. By looking at those bloodshot baby blues of yours, it seems that it did it's job. Interesting that someone in your office referred you to the competition.

BALDINO

The what?

ERICA

The bad guys. They do naughty nasty things like start epidemics in one country with germ warfare agents when they get paid big bucks by another country. Poison the water in drought-stricken areas where kids are dying. A few of them have even found that magic musical chord that will make the masses march and dance to their own deaths. Thank God, or whoever is still in charge of the universe, that Hitler didn't get it first.

BALDINO

Cathy...Where's...?

ERICA

Great to see you, too after all these years, John.

Erica smells the food John has been eating, puts them into celophane sample bags.

ERICA

She homebaked these for you?

BALDINO

Yeah, but...

ERICA

And these?

BALDINO

When I got here, they were---

ERICA

Loaded up with---A137. Ten migs a biteful.

Erica tests a sample in a quickly-assay system kit.

ERICA

Twenty migs...with no aftertaste. She knows how to make her mind altering drugs taste good and potent. Maybe if she was working for us...

JOHN

Who's us?

Erica takes a look at Johns manuscript.

ERICA

Dead scientists who are very much Alive, and determined that the human race will not die from starvation, anthrax bombardment, insecticide clouds, boredom, stagnation apathy or even AM radio. All we're looking for a few good lunatics with Ph.D.s and MDs...Particularly those who can write what is correct so...poetically. That trick you earned is useful to us too.

JOHN

What trick?

ERICA

Crossing the life-death line without a passport from the Pope or the Dhalli Llama.

JOHN

I don't understand.

ERICA

That which doesn't kill your brain cells makes you stronger. One more bite of Cathy's homebaked Irish cooking, and A137 would have done you in, or the insanity would have made you do it for them.

BALDINO

Irish...At least she wasn't lying about that.

ERICA

Other things, too.

Erica retrieves a note, a Valentine from Cathy. She gives it to Baldino.

BALDINO

A "Dear John" letter.

ERICA

You almost converted her. Maybe we'll find her before her people do.

BALDINO

What now?

ERICA

Take two of these.

Erica gives him pills from a large collection.

ERICA

Write a story. See a ghost or two, and call me in the morning.

Erica kisses John. It feels very good to her. John is emotionally moved.

JOHN

I...eh...

ERICA

One more ghost, then...?

JOHN

Then what?

ERICA

Let's listen to what the ghost tells you,
first.

Erica leaves. John looks at the last photo in the book of people to write about. It is his brother, Vincent. John looks at the photo, smiling. The door SLAMS behind him. Internal panic, then the cat meows. John pets the creature, begins to write again. His hands are in far better shape, thanks to Erica's pills.

INT - FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

Open casket funeral, MIKE and HELENA BALDINO in the box. We see their head, kissing. Sorrowfully looking on, JOHN BALDINO, early thirties.

JOHN

Mom, Dad...this is---

Enter, from behind, VINCENT, in an Army Uniform, from an undisclosed country.

VINCENT

---what they wanted.

We see that the couple is nearly naked, embracing in the moment of death.

JOHN

Two of the most effective superspies in the
free world. And they killed by
a drunk driver. Or were they?

VINCENT

Do you really want me to answer that
question? If I do, you'll be in the next
box.

JOHN

Was it a drunk driver? Just a drunk driver?

VINCENT

(eyes looking away)

Yes.

JOHN

Do you really think I can't handle the truth
about the world as it is?

VINCENT

It gets in the way of knowing how the world
should be, and making it become something
better than it is.

JOHN

Are you going to write to me?

VINCENT

Lots of lies, in words. But the truth
will always be between the lines.

JOHN

What 'place of change' this time?

Vincent looks at the uniform.

VINCENT

Keosiv...I can't pronounce it.
But they've got less bad guys on their
side than on the other side.

JOHN

Which puts you on the right side.

VINCENT

For now. Being on the right side, for now,
is all guys like me get. But you've got the
hard part, Doctor John. Keeping bodies,
minds and spirits alive when the bombs
of apathy, indifference and mediocraty are blowing up
around you....that's REAL soldiering.

JOHN

That sounds like something Mom would
say, and Pop would make us listen to.

VINCENT

And something you'll pass on to the world
one day, Doctor John. Just a feeling...

DISSOLVE TO

EXT - JETTIES - TWILIGHT

John completes the last line on the book. He closes it, then looks up. He sees, on the beach, Helena dressed as a Peace Corp Nun and Mike in combat fatigues, waving.

HELENA

John. Take care of yourself.

MIKE

Take care of everybody else, then you'll take care of yourself.

JOHN

What about the dedication?

HELENA

Whatever you decide, will be great.

MIKE

Agonize over it! It's good for you. You enjoy pain.

As Mike rants on, Helena rolls her eyes.

MIKE

It's good for a man to feel pain.
And Iron Mike Baldino raised two
men. Always on watch! Always
on the job! Always doin'
great, not just good! Always
doin' better than great! Always doin'---

Helena kisses Mike, quieting his rant.

MIKE

...I...eh...we gotta go.

Mike and Helena fade out. John smiles fondly. Then, a voice behind him.

VINCENT (offscreen)

You, too. You gotta go.

John turns around, suddenly. Vincent is in front of him.

VINCENT

The places of change.

John extends his hand to Vincent, who seems very real, but Vincent turns out to be an apparition. John falls into the water.

JOHN

I can't swim. I can't...I..I...I CAN swim

John finds out that he CAN swim, enjoying the water.

JOHN

I can swim. I can swim. I can...

John finds floating in the water, a newspaper. He reads it---a photo of Vincent Baldino on the front page, doing noble deed in war zone. Photo under it reads..."Unidentified Good Samaritan Soldier saves school of children."

JOHN

Get my ass to the places of change.

John looks at the paper. Driftwood comes in toward him.

JOHN

Let's see, Africa is that way. North is this way.
That means...

John gets on the driftwood, starts paddling to Africa, singing Mozart's Requiem (or Bach Brandenburg?) with joy as he rows.

PAN OUT to Beachhouse, Erica on phone.

ERICA

Yeah. We got him...We're on our
way.

Erica plays her flute to the music John is singing. Both renditions get very upbeat, and improved as a modern syncopated style.

END

FADE TO (or heroic medical intermittenat things)

